South Haven Tribune

$3

July 5, 2026

Photos provided / Tom Renner

New lifeguard watch towers for South Haven's South Beach were installed Monday morning.

New lifeguard towers boost beach safety

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — New lifeguard watch towers for South Haven's South Beach were installed Monday morning, just in time for the Fourth of July holiday weekend.

According to a news release, the two stands were purchased by the city for $65,200 to give lifeguards a good view of the Lake Michigan waterfront.

The lifeguard program was recently revived after it had been active from the late 1930s until it was terminated in 2001.

In April of 2025, the South Haven City Council

See **TOWERS**, page A2

Two lifeguard watch towers were installed at South Haven's South Beach Monday.

Steam locomotive revs up at Michigan Flywheelers Museum

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The Michigan Flywheelers Museum will be firing up the historic Hanson Express No. 902 on July 11 as volunteers push to complete the final stretch of the Black River Railroad.

According to a news release, the public is invited to watch the 15 inch grand scale steam locomotive from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. as it pushes ballast – the stone gravel bed that stabilizes railroad ties – through the newly constructed track tunnel.

The tunnel is on the final stretch of the track loop which was started three years ago.

"The No. 902 locomotive – originally built in the mid-20th century to pull thousands of vacationers at the famous Eden Springs Amusement Park in Benton Harbor – was donated to the museum by local businessman Merlin Hanson," the release stated. "Now, it serves as the crown jewel of the museum's ambitious Black River Railroad project."

Community members, history buffs and train enthusiasts of all ages are invited to not only watch the engine in motion, but to jump right in alongside the track crew to help spread and pack the stone ballast under and around the track. No prior railroad or construction experience is required to help out. Volunteers will be on-site to demonstrate

See **FLYWHEELERS**, page A2

Why is Gordie Howe bridge not open yet?

It's complicated

By CHAD LIVENGOOD
The Detroit News (TNS)

DETROIT — It's been three weeks since the construction of the Gordie Howe International Bridge was officially completed, and the opening of the new $4.7 billion span is as clear as Detroit River water.

During the week of June 8, the Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority was making plans to formally open the new Canadian-financed Detroit-to-Windsor bridge after eight years of construction, which officially ended on June 9, according to a Wall Street rating agency report published Monday.

But those plans were canceled on June 11, one day before the planned ribbon-cutting ceremony on the Ontario side of the span. The bridge authority had told stakeholders it planned to open the bridge to its first truck and passenger traffic on June 15, but that never happened.

Here's the latest update on what's been going on over the past three weeks:

Why is the bridge closed?

Canadian and U.S. officials have been tight-lipped about the exact reasons the bridge opening was postponed indefinitely.

But it's not because of any technical or construction issues, officials have said.

On June 1, Department of Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne

See **BRIDGE**, page A2

Parasailor rescued from entanglement on SH shore

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — A parasailor was rescued after becoming entangled in the canopy's ropes and unable to return to the Lake Michigan shore Tuesday afternoon.

According to a news release, South Haven Area Emergency Services responded to the incident at North Beach after another nearby parasailor caught the attention of people on the shore who alerted authorities.

South Haven Area Emergency Services were able to successfully untangle the ropes and return the uninjured sailor, who was wearing a life jacket, to shore.

Emergency services was assisted by the South Haven Police Department.

Photos provided / Tom Renner

South Haven Emergency Services rescued an entangled parasailor off the shores of North Beach Tuesday afternoon.

The Tribune: Celebrating Our 127th Year

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Support the Local Businesses Who Help Support Our Community!

TOWERS

From page A1

began working to create a new lifeguard program.

In May of 2025, Double Haul Solutions was hired as consultants to design and implement the lifeguard program.

The lifeguards started working at South Beach on Memorial Day and have since responded to several incidents, including saving South Haven Mayor Annie Brown's husband after he collapsed from cardiac arrest on the beach.

The lifeguards are on duty from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. seven days a week through Labor Day.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104.

FLYWHEELERS

From page A1

track construction.

Participants looking to help lay ballast should wear sturdy, closed-toe shoes and work clothes. Work gloves are highly recommended.

The special event marks only the second time the iconic engine has been started up for the public to see in the last 50 years.

"Firing up the House of David engine is an incredible, unique experience that few people get to see in modern times," Michigan Flywheelers Museum President Patrick Ingalls said in the release. "We wanted to share this special event with the community that has supported this project."

The Michigan Flywheelers Museum, located at 06285 68th Street, South Haven, MI, is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and restoration of antique gas and steam engines, tractors and historic farm machinery.

Spanning over 80 acres, the museum features operational historical displays, a 1920s "Olde Town" and special events.

For more information and updates, contact michiganflywheelers@yahoo.com, call 269-639-2010 or go to the museum's Facebook page.

BRIDGE

From page A1

Mullin told a U.S. Senate committee that Customs and Border Protection was "staffed, ready to go" for checking vehicles at the new 148-acre U.S. port of entry complex in southwest Detroit.

On June 11, the WDBA's interim CEO, Chuck Andary, issued a statement that gave an open-ended timeline: "Canada and the United States have agreed to delay the opening of the bridge, taking the necessary time to resolve any outstanding issues."

What is the holdup?

In February, President Donald Trump threatened to block the opening of the bridge if Canada didn't make concessions in trade negotiations.

Hours before Trump's threat, his commerce secretary, Howard Lutnick, met with Michigan businessman Matthew Moroun, owner of the Ambassador Bridge, Detroit's only bridge to Windsor.

Lutnick and U.S. Ambassador to Canada Pete Hoekstra, a former Michigan congressman, pushed back on efforts by the Canadians and Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's office to open the bridge, with Hoekstra saying "lots of people objected because they were caught off guard."

Since the bridge opening was delayed, two of Trump's Michigan Republican allies, state House Speaker Matt Hall and U.S. Senate hopeful Mike Rogers, have argued the U.S. could get a better deal, suggesting the U.S. should get a share of the toll revenue.

Lutnick, former CEO of the global investment bank Cantor Fitzgerald, intervened in a bid to negotiate a larger share of the bridge's toll revenue for the U.S., Bloomberg News reported on June 26, citing people familiar with the matter.

"Secretary Lutnick is committed to securing the best possible deal for America on the Gordie Howe International Bridge," Commerce Department spokesman Benno Kass told Bloomberg in a statement that did not elaborate on Lutnick's position.

David Guralnick / The Detroit News / TNS

The Gordie Howe International Bridge in Detroit on June 8.

Rogers told The Detroit News that the Trump administration should demand the Canadians jack up a tariff on Chinese-made vehicles as part of a deal to open the Gordie Howe bridge.

What are the financial implications for the bridge remaining closed?

Canada financed the Gordie Howe International Bridge through a public-private partnership that is managed by an international consortium of infrastructure companies called Bridging North America.

Bridging North America, or BNA, agreed to a concession contract with the WDBA to design and build and then maintain the bridge over a 30-year period.

S&P Global Ratings on June 29 upgraded BNA's bond rating from BBB- to BBB after the substantial completion of the bridge on June 9, two days before the ribbon-cutting ceremony was scuttled. The Wall Street ratings analysts expressed optimism that BNA's credit risk is slightly lower than the construction phase of the project because the bridge is ready to be operational and collecting tolls.

During the 30-year maintenance period, BNA "receives monthly availability payments to cover debt service and operations and maintenance (O&M), major maintenance and rehabilitation work, and an equity return," according to S&P Global Ratings.

But S&P analysts also cautioned they could lower BNA's credit rating if "unfavorable political events affect revenues should WDBA be unable or unwilling to make timely availability payments."

"It is unlikely that revenues will increase beyond our forecast except to offset cost inflation," the rating agency's analysts added.

While the bridge is not operating, Canada is not collecting tolls intended to pay BNA to service the bridge's debt and operating costs.

Under a 2012 deal struck by then-Gov. Rick Snyder, Michigan and Canada have joint ownership of the new bridge, but Michigan doesn't get 50 percent of the toll revenues until after Canada's debt is paid off. Michigan taxpayers contributed nothing to the project.

"The only party that benefits from the bridge being closed is the Morouns. Period," Snyder told The News on June 16.

What are other politicians saying?

While Hall has cheered the Gordie Howe remaining closed and Rogers has vowed to get the bridge open should Michigan voters send him to the Senate, some Democrats are starting to rail against Trump and the Republicans for keeping the span closed to traffic.

Democrats are pointing to Moroun's $1 million donation to a Trump super PAC in January, about three weeks before meeting with Lutnick, which was reportedly followed hours later by Trump's public threat to keep the new bridge closed.

State Sen. Mallory McMorrow, a Democratic U.S. Senate hopeful, has a TV ad out where she's standing in Delray Park, with the Gordie Howe International Bridge in the background, and calls on Trump to "open this damn bridge."

McMorrow, D-Royal Oak, has been using the bridge as a campaign talking point.

"This is a symbol, right in the heart of Michigan, of the corruption of the Trump administration," McMorrow said on CNN last week. "... The Moroun family ... made a million-dollar donation to Trump's super PAC, they got a meeting with Howard Lutnick and then, all of the sudden, they finally found a guy to do their bidding in President Trump, who's now railing against this bridge."

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Meet our Pet of the Week, Cheeky Boi!

Cheeky Boi is a 3-year-old orange cat with a fitting name and a personality to match. This sweet, social guy believes attention is best when it's directed entirely at him, and honestly, he makes a pretty convincing case.

Cheeky Boi loves being around people and isn't shy about asking for affection. One thing that makes him extra special? He actually enjoys being picked up, which cat people know can feel like finding a four-leaf clover.

Cheeky Boi is the kind of cat who settles right into your day and makes himself an important part of it. Whether he's supervising your activities, requesting cuddles, or making sure he remains the center of attention, he's happiest when he's close to his people.

If you're looking for an outgoing, affectionate companion with plenty of personality, Cheeky Boi is ready to steal the spotlight and your heart. Submit an adoption survey at al-van.org/adopt!

THIS WEEK'S WISH LIST
Non-clumping clay cat litter, Pate cat food, Kitten Milk Replacer (KMR).

The Spotlight
A Weekly Guide To Services & Business Around Town.

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If interested in including your business here contact freid@thehp.com

Photo provided

South Haven Theatre Series will present "Audrey Hepburn," written and performed by Leslie Goddard on July 18.

South Haven Theatre Series brings Audrey Hepburn to life

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — South Haven Theatre Series recently announced its second 2026 performance: "Audrey Hepburn," written and performed by Leslie Goddard, Ph.D.

According to a news release, the play takes place at 7:30 p.m. on July 18 in the Theatre Series' new 2026 location: The First Congregational Church, 651 Phoenix St., South Haven, MI.

"It's 1989, and Hollywood icon Audrey Hepburn is at her home in Switzerland being interviewed about her work as a UNICEF goodwill ambassador," the release stated. "Over cocktails, she delights her guests with stories about her childhood during World War II, her Hollywood roles in such remarkable films as Roman Holiday and Breakfast at Tiffany's and her lifelong efforts to find real love and overcome her own deep-seated fears."

Historian and performer Goddard is known for her portrayals of iconic figures. An award-winning actress and scholar, Goddard has been presenting history programs for more than 20 years.

Goddard holds a Ph.D. from Northwestern University, having specialized in American studies and U.S. history and a master's degree in theater.

"An audience favorite, she returns to South Haven Theatre Series after headlining previous popular shows, including Lucille Ball, Betty the Pan Am Stewardess, Julia Child and Elizabeth II," the release stated.

"Audrey Hepburn" and the two remaining 2026 South Haven Theatre Series productions will be held at The First Congregational Church, 651 Phoenix St., South Haven, MI.

Tickets are $15 and students are free. Doors open at 7 p.m. with performances starting at 7:30 p.m.

Tickets are available online at www.southhaventheatreseries.org/event-details/audrey-hepburn or at the door. Cash, debit, or credit cards are accepted.

Seating will be limited at the new venue and it is recommended to purchase tickets online in advance of the show.

"The South Haven Theatre Series is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization dedicated to enriching our community through thoughtful, socially engaging professional theatrical productions," the release stated. "The series is made possible through generous grants and corporate and individual donations."

To learn more or to donate, go to southhaventheatreseries.org.

For more information, contact southhaventheatreseries@gmail.com.

Photo provided

Serita's Black Rose Duo will perform in a special concert and dinner experience at First Congregational UCC on July 19.

Soulful music and dinner event in South Haven

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — Culinary and musical arts intertwine for a Soul Food Experience at First Congregational UCC.

According to a news release, Serita's Black Rose Duo will share their talents in music and food during the event at 5 p.m. on July 19.

"Serita Crowley and Jon Hayes are known for their soulful vocals, bluesy harmonica and rockin' guitar," the release stated. "Serita Crowley is also famous for her down home cooking with a gourmet twist."

The menu will include BBQ chicken or cauliflower, greens, sweet potato, cornbread and pound cake, followed by a blues and soul concert by Serita's Black Rose Duo.

The event will happen upstairs in Fellowship Hall (elevator access is available through the office entrance).

Tickets cost $20 and include dinner and the concert.

Reservations are required by July 12.

To reserve a ticket, call Diane and Lisa at 269-637-3804 (opt. 5) or online at eventbrite.com. There is a $3.18 service charge added for online tickets.

First Congregational UCC is located at 651 Phoenix St. in South Haven.

Senior Services to host 4th annual gala

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — Senior Services of Van Buren County recently announced its Fourth Annual Gala, set for July 18 at the South Haven Senior Center.

According to a news release, the doors open for the event at 5 p.m. at 08337 M-140 Highway and is open to anyone 21 years and older.

The event aims to raise $50,000 for the center's building fund.

"We are excited to celebrate our Fourth Annual Gala on July 18," Executive Director of Senior Services of Van Buren County Diane Rigozzi said in the release. The South Haven Senior Center has become a cornerstone of our community since opening, and we have seen tremendous growth in engagement and participation in our programs.

Guests can expect an evening filled with food, music and dancing. Additionally, there will be live and silent auctions featuring an array of items and experiences, as well as opportunities to contribute to Fund-a-Need services.

Photo provided

Senior Services of Van Buren County will host its fourth annual gala on July 18 at the South Haven Senior Center.

"The last gala was a wonderful experience, and we can't wait to create another memorable evening filled with joy, connection and support for our beloved Senior Center," Rigozzi said in the release.

To support the gala, Senior Services of Van Buren County is seeking sponsorships that range from $500 to $3,000. Businesses and community members can also contribute by donating items for the auctions, such as gift cards, merchandise, unique experiences and complete baskets.

Those interested in becoming a sponsor or donor can reach out to Tracie Wheeler at 269-256-4332 or via email at twheeler@ss-vbc.org.

Tickets for the event are $25 each, with an added incentive for those looking to gather a group: buy a reserved table for six or eight and receive one free ticket.

Tickets can be purchased at the South Haven Senior Center, by calling 269-256-4332, or online at bit.ly/SSVBC-2026-Gala.

"Mark your calendars and join Senior Services of Van Buren County as they come together for a night of fun, community and fundraising," the release stated

For tickets, sponsorships or monetary donations, go to bit.ly/SSVBC-2026-Gala or contact Tracie Wheeler at 269-256-4332.

"Senior Services of Van Buren County, founded in 1995, provides services, opportunities and caring support to seniors to enhance their quality of life," the release stated.

As the only full-service, multi-location senior center in Van Buren County, the center offers a wide range of healthy aging activities and aging-in-place services that impact aspects of well-being, including social, physical, emotional, environmental and financial.

'A generational project' | MDOT shares staging plans for Main Street construction on SJ

By LAUREN RICE
Paxton Media Group

ST. JOSEPH — The Michigan Department of Transportation is nearing the end of its design phase for the reconstruction of Main Street in downtown St. Joseph.

Years in the making, the project is expected to renovate the I-94 business loop, which includes Main Street between Central Avenue and the Blossomland Bridge, as well as Ship and Port streets east of Main.

"It's a generational project," MDOT Projects & Contracts Administration Engineer Jon Smith said. "The last time the concrete was done in downtown St. Joseph, brand new, was the 1950s. So, it's been over 70 years since the concrete was redone. I think it's going to make the downtown look entirely different."

The "how" was a primary question posed by attendees of an informational session held in June at the Maud Preston Palenske Memorial Library. How will traffic patterns change during construction? How will businesses be impacted? How is it going to work?

Smith said they will ensure access to businesses and homes downtown. Primary detour routes redirect local traffic to Langley Avenue, and commercial traffic across Napier Avenue over to M-139, which will be finished with its reconstruction at that point.

The west side of Main Street should remain accessible, especially via Lakeshore Drive.

The construction staging is different from typical projects. For this road, they'll be sectioning it into six pieces, mainly north- and south-oriented, and then working on one at a time.

Stage one is work on Ship Street, transforming it into a two-lane road, with decorative median islands and some left turn lanes. This is scheduled for the fall of 2027.

Following Ship Street is work on Port Street for stage two of construction. This road, also, will be turned into two-way traffic.

Steve Reschke, a designer for MDOT consultant Tetra Tech, said the end result will place Port Street under the control of the city of St. Joseph while Ship Street remains on the I-94 business loop trunkline.

Don Campbell / PMG file photo

Pedestrian safety is a priority for residents and the Michigan Department of Transportation in their plans for renovating Main Street in downtown St. Joseph, starting in 2027.

"The way this two-way conversion came about was through some early stakeholder meetings," he said. "... Somebody suggested 'Can we look at making Ship Street work two-way?' Some people noted safety concerns that drivers not familiar with the area would accidentally go the wrong way on one of those streets."

Stage two is expected to run into the winter of 2027-28. It would be followed by work on Main Street between Elm and Ship streets, marking stage three and working into the spring of 2028.

Stage four continues Main Street work south, between Elm and Price streets into the summer of 2028.

Smith said the work on Main Street is going to make it look more like a downtown, and significantly different than it currently appears. There will be wider sidewalks, additional and enhanced pedestrian crossings and additional turn lanes.

"Pedestrian safety was a big component of it," he said. "A big change was making it so every pedestrian crossing that way across Main Street is either going to have a signal or it's going to have some sort of a refuge in the middle where people can stop and look the other way to make sure they can make it across."

Pedestrian safety is also a priority reflected in the responses to a public survey conducted in 2024. Of 875 responses, crosswalk safety was the most popular identified priority.

The second highest was parking. Street spaces along Main Street will be taken out as part of the renovations, turned into expanded sidewalks and landscaping.

While MDOT crews and contractors are out adding trees and redoing concrete, they're also coordinating with the city of St. Joseph for infrastructure work. It's more efficient to get to the pipes while the road is already torn up, rather than digging things up twice.

City Engineer and Assistant City Manager Tim Zebell said they'll work on the sanitary sewer and water main lines, as well as the storm drains.

It might look like they're digging things up and burying them repeatedly, he said, but crews will be accessing pipes at different depths, working with them and testing them, and then moving on to the next.

Stage five is the last section of Main Street, south of Price Street. It encompasses the same road work renovations, as well as adding a second left turn lane from Main Street onto Niles Avenue.

That is projected to be under construction from early summer to the fall in 2028.

Part of Niles Avenue will also be resurfaced in the fall of 2028 for stage six.

The project timeline is dependent on weather and other variables. In total, this was the fifth public information session on the Main Street project in St. Joseph.

City Manager Emily Hackworth said she is looking forward to the finished product on this project. It's a sentiment reflected by several attendees at the information session.

"MDOT has been such a great partner," Hackworth said. "They have really listened to what the city needs and that's reflected in what they've put together."

Contact: lrice@TheHP.com, 932-0360.

Van Buren County
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MSHDA
MICHIGAN STATE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD FOR THE STATE OF MICHIGAN'S HOUSING RECOVERY FUND DATA REPORTING

The Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) is responsible for preparing and publishing the Recovery Housing Program's annual reports and overall data projection comparisons vs. result to date based on the following chart:

Table 1: Recovery Housing Program 10/1/2022 - 9/30/2025

HUD Fiscal Year	Total HUD Grant Award	Amount Awarded to Agencies	Acutal Number of People Served	Anticipated Number Served
FY2020	$899,000.00	$872,030.00	156	112
FY2021	$879,048.00	$744,106.00	186	103
FY2022	$862,307.00	$836,438.00	211	79
FY2023	$1,016,651.00	$841,228.00	153	93
Total	**$3,657,006.00**	**$3,293,802.00**	**706**	**387**

***Remaining balance of HUD Grant Awards and any unspent agency awards will be repurposed by Sept. 2026.**

The public comment period will commence on July 2, 2026 and end on July 20, 2026 for solicitation of comments from the public regarding the Recovery Housing Program data reporting and successfully exceeding the anticipated assistance goals on an annual basis.

All interested parties are invited to submit written comments directly related to the RHP information report content published on the MSHDA website at Michigan Consolidated Plan or www.michigan.gov/mshda/neighborhoods/michigan-consolidated-plan.

Individuals and organizations may submit written comments to MSHDA, Attn: Pierre-Denise Gilliam, 735 East Michigan Avenue, P.O. Box 30044, Lansing, MI 48909. Written comments must be received no later than July 20, 2026. Comments can also be submitted to the MSHDA Consolidated Plan Coordinator via e-mail to mshda-ndd@michigan.gov.

Copies of the Michigan RHP report may be downloaded free of charge from the MSHDA website.

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0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
Van Buren COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate

CASE NO. and JUDGE
2026-1106-DE
Hon. Susan Metzger

Court address:
212 Paw Paw St. Ste 220,
Paw Paw MI, 49079

Estate of: Fred Albini, deceased
Date of birth: 02/09/1950

TO ALL CREDITORS: **
The decedent has no known creditors.

NOTICE TO CREDITORS:
The decedent, Fred Albini, died 06/07/2026. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Kevin Tait 20900 CR 681 Bangor, MI 49013 personal representative, or to both the probate court at 212 Paw Paw St. Ste 220, Paw Paw MI, 49079 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Date: 06/07/2026

Kevin Tait
Personal representative(s)
20900 CR 681
Bangor, MI 49013
269-906-0769

0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
COUNTY OF VAN BUREN

PUBLICATION OF NOTICE

In the matter of: Roseanna Bronson Estate

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:* Monjanique Amulenko, Devarious Anderson

Whose address(es) are unknown and whose interest in the matter may be barred or affected by the following:

TAKE NOTICE:*
I Johnny Anderson III, intend to request my informal appointment as personal representative of the estate. A copy of the application is attached. This notice is being served upon each person whose right to an appointment is prior or equal to my own. The court will not act upon my application until 14 days after the date of this notice was mailed or until 7 days after this notice was personally served.
The actions you may take include:
*Upon paying a filing fee, filing a petition for formal proceedings to appoint a personal representative.
*Upon paying a filing fee, filing an application for informal appointment of yourself as person representative provided you have a higher priority to be appointed.
*Contacting an attorney for assistance in representing you in any proceeding you wish to file in the court.
The court will not be able to provide you with any legal advice in completing or filing the forms.

Date: 06/23/2026

Johnny Anderson III
Petitioner name(s)
2206 Bender Rd.
Portage, MI 49002
269-543-7776

PUBLIC NOTICE
The South Haven Township Board of Review will meet on: Tuesday, July 21, 2026, at 2pm at the Township Hall 09167 Blue Star Hwy South Haven, Michigan. The purpose of this meeting is to correct qualified errors. NO VALUATION APPEALS CAN BE HEARD.
The July and December Boards of Review have different authorities than the March Board of Review. The July and December Boards of Review meet to correct Qualified Errors, and to consider appeals related to the Principal Residence Exemption, Qualified Agricultural Exemption, Taxable Value Uncapping, the Qualified Start-up Business Exemption, and Poverty Exemptions.
Contact Information:
Don Jollay, MAAO
Phone: (815) 546-8288
Email: assessor@southhaventwpmi.gov
Mailing Address:
09167 Blue Star Hwy
South Haven, MI 49090

GENEVA TOWNSHIP VAN BUREN COUNTY, MICHIGAN
*RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING PUBLIC POLICY REGARDING UTILITY-SCALE ENERGY INSTALLATIONS IN GENEVA TOWNSHIP
*WHEREAS, Geneva Township is aware of utility-scale renewable energy projects being constructed around the State, including wind, solar, and battery energy storage facilities.
*WHEREAS, Geneva Township recognizes that it cannot wholly prevent the installation of these projects in the Township due to renewable energy preemption legislation adopted by the Michigan Legislature, being Public Acts 233 and 234 of 2023, and due to the Township's lack of zoning regulation, but nevertheless desires to establish a public policy with respect to such projects.
*WHEREAS, the Township Board has determined that utility-scale wind, solar, and battery energy storage installations would negatively impact the rural character and aesthetic qualities that define our community.
*WHEREAS, the Township Board has concerns about the potential environmental impacts of large-scale energy installations, including but not limited to wildlife habitat disruption, soil erosion, and potential groundwater impacts.
*WHEREAS, the Township Board recognizes the importance of preserving agricultural land and open spaces that contribute to the community's identity and economic base.
*NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Geneva Township Board hereby declares it to be the public policy of Geneva Township that utility-scale wind, solar, and battery energy storage installations are not compatible with the township's vision for community development and are not desired within township boundaries.
*BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Geneva Township Board will provide this resolution to any developer or State agency inquiring as to the construction and operation of utility-scale wind, solar, and battery energy storage installations within the township.
*BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution shall be effective immediately.
*CERTIFICATION I, Brandie Rainey, Clerk of Geneva Township, hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was duly adopted by the Township Board at a special meeting held on the 24h day of June 2026.

NOTICE OF REGISTRATION FOR THE STATE PRIMARY ELECTION TO BE HELD ON AUGUST 4, 2026, CITY OF SOUTH HAVEN

TO THE QUALIFIED ELECTORS OF THE CITY OF SOUTH HAVEN, VAN BUREN & ALLEGAN COUNTIES, MICHIGAN:
PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that any qualified elector who is not already registered may register to vote at the office of the South Haven City Clerk, the office of the County Clerk; a Secretary of State branch office, or other designated state agency. Qualified electors who have a valid Michigan driver's license or State ID, may register online at https://mvic.sos.state.mi.us/. Registration forms may be obtained at mi.gov/vote and mailed or dropped off at the office of the South Haven City Clerk. Voters who are already registered may update their registration at www.expressSOS.com.

TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that the last day to register in any manner other than in-person with the South Haven City Clerk's Office is **Monday, July 20, 2026.** After this date, anyone who qualifies as an elector must register to vote in person with proof of residency (MCL 168.492) at the following location and times:

South Haven City Clerk's Office – 539 Phoenix Street, South Haven, MI 49090.
· Regular Business Hours: Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
· Saturday, August 1, 2026 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
· Election Day, Tuesday, August 4, 2026 from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that the election will be for the purposes of voting on the nomination of candidates of the Democratic and Republican Parties for Partisan offices, Viz:
· United States Congressional Representative; United States Senator
· State Governor; State Senator; State Representative
· Delegate to the County Convention
· County Surveyor (Van Buren County)

And for the purpose of voting on the following proposals:
· **VAN BUREN COUNTY Public Safety Millage** Renewal Proposal—This proposal will allow Van Buren County to continue to levy 0.5332 mill, which was previously approved by the electors to fund drug enforcement and road patrol services, but will expire with the 2026 levy. Shall Van Buren County levy 0.5332 mill ($0.5332 per thousand dollars of taxable value), for a period of four (4) years, 2027 to 2030, inclusive, for the exclusive purpose of providing funds for the Van Buren County Sheriff's Office for Drug Enforcement and Road Patrol? This is a renewal of previously authorized millage which will expire with the 2026 levy. It is estimated that 0.5332 mill would raise approximately $2,380,982 when first levied in 2027.
· **VAN BUREN COUNTY Ambulance Millage Renewal Proposal—**This proposal will allow Van Buren County to levy 0.9353 mill, which was previously approved by the electors to fund ambulance services, but which will expire with the 2026 levy. Shall Van Buren County levy 0.9353 mill (0.9353 per thousand dollars of taxable value), for a period of four (4) years, 2027 - 2030, inclusive, for the exclusive purpose of providing funds for ambulance services for the County? This is a renewal of previously authorized millage which will expire with the 2026 levy, the previously authorized millage of 0.9370 mills will decrease by 0.0017 mills to equal a total of 0.9353 mills. It is estimated that 0.9353 mill would raise approximately $4,184,390 when first levied in 2027.
· **VAN BUREN COUNTY Conservation District** Millage Renewal Proposal—This proposal will allow Van Buren County to continue to fund conservation programs at 0.0989 mill which represents the previously-approved 0.10 mill with the required Headlee Rollbacks factored in. As a renewal of previously authorized millage which expired with the 2025 levy, the question presented in this ballot proposal is - Shall the expired previously voted increase in the tax limitation imposed under Article IX, Sec. 6 of the Michigan Constitution in Van Buren County, Michigan, of 0.1000 mill ($0.10 per $1,000 of Taxable Value), reduced to 0.0989 mills ($0.0989 per $1,000 taxable value) by the required millage rollbacks, be renewed at up to 0.0989 ($0.0989 per $1,000 taxable value) for a period of ten (10) years, 2026 through 2035 inclusive, for the sole purpose of funding Van Buren Conservation District programs including assisting landowners in the protection, enhancement, and restoration of natural resources, assist agricultural producers in the protection of soil and water and implementation of best management practices on farmland, increase household hazardous waste and recycling collection opportunities, and continue water quality initiatives, within the boundaries of Van Buren County? A portion of the revenue collected may be required to be distributed to the Downtown Development Authorities, Tax Increment Financing Authorities, Local Development Financing Authorities and Brownfield Redevelopment Authorities established in Van Buren County, City of South Haven, Bangor City, Hartford City, Keeler Township, Villages of Lawrence, Lawton, Paw Paw and Mattawan. If approved and levied in full, this millage will raise an estimated $442,463.54 for Van Buren Conservation District services in the first calendar year of the levy based on taxable value. The estimated cost to a household owning a $100,000 (SEV $50,000) home would be $4.945 per year.
· **ALLEGAN COUNTY Senior Citizen Services** Millage Renewal Proposal—For the purpose of providing funds for services to senior citizens in Allegan County, shall Allegan County be authorized to levy a millage annually in an amount not to exceed 0.4753 mill ($0.4753 per each $1,000 of taxable value), which is a renewal of the previously authorized millage rate that expired in 2025, against all taxable property within Allegan County, for a period of four (4) years, 2026 through 2029, inclusive? The estimate of the revenue the County will collect in the first year (2026) if the millage is approved and levied by the County is approximately $3,766,422.
· **CITY OF SOUTH HAVEN Controlled Substances Enforcement Millage Proposal—** Shall the previously voted increase in the limitation on general ad valorem taxes within the City of South Haven, Michigan, to fund activities to enforce laws in the City of South Haven which prohibit or control the manufacture, sale, delivery and use of "controlled substances" as defined by applicable state laws, rules and regulations, as reduced by the required millage rollback, be renewed at 0.6508 mill ($0.6508 per $1,000 of taxable value) and increased by 0.0492 mill ($0.0492 per $1,000 of taxable value), for a total of 0.70 mill ($0.70 per $1,000 of taxable value), for a period of five (5) years, 2027 through 2031, inclusive, and shall the City of South Haven be authorized to levy this millage annually on all taxable property within the City of South Haven, thereby raising an estimated $467,150 in the first year of the levy? To the extent required by law, a portion of the revenues from this millage may be captured by the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority of the City of South Haven, the Downtown Development Authority of the City of South Haven, and the City of South Haven Local Development Finance Authority.

Sample ballots with the candidates and full text of the proposals can be obtained at the South Haven City Clerk's Office, 539 Phoenix St., South Haven, Michigan 49090 and at www.mi.gov/vote.

POLLING PLACES: The Election Day polling places are located at the following locations: City of South Haven City Hall, 539 Phoenix Street, South Haven, Michigan 49090.

EARLY VOTING: Early voting begins the second Saturday before each State and Federal election and ends the Sunday before the election at the Human Services Building 57418 C.R. 681, Hartford, MI 49057 during the following days and times: Sat/Sun 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.; Mon/Tue/Thur/Fri 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; Wed 12:00 pm-8:00 p.m.

ABSENT VOTER BALLOTS: Any registered voter may request an Absent Voter Ballot. The South Haven City Clerk's Office must have a signed application to issue an Absent Voter Ballot. You may apply online at www.mi.gov/vote or at the South Haven City Clerk's Office. Monday, August 3, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. is the deadline to request an absentee ballot in person, except for those who register to vote on Election Day. Those registering to vote on Election Day, August 4, 2026, are eligible to receive an Absent Voter Ballot at the South Haven City Clerk's Office.

Persons with disabilities needing accommodations should contact the South Haven City Clerk's Office during regular business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday: (269) 637-0750.

Brittany Abrams, City of South Haven City Clerk

RESERVE THIS SPACE
TODAY!

Market One recognizes leaders at awards event

By TRIBUNE STAFF

PAW PAW — Market One hosted its sixth annual awards event at Marion Magnolia Farms, bringing together local business owners, civic leaders and community partners from Cass and Van Buren counties.

The evening served as a celebration of the achievements of standout businesses and forward-thinking municipalities that are driving meaningful impact across Southwest Michigan.

The event featured a keynote address by Seth Carlson of the Michigan Office of Rural Prosperity, alongside a reflective and forward-looking update from Market One leadership highlighting ongoing initiatives and progress.

A centerpiece of the evening was the presentation of awards recognizing organizations for their innovation, leadership and contributions to economic development. Award recipients were selected through a nomination and application process, underscoring their exceptional accomplishments and commitment to the community.

The 2026 Market One Award recipients were:

■ Community Champion of the Year: Owen-Ames-Kimball Co.

■ Municipal Trailblazer of the Year: The Village of Edwardsburg

■ Business Innovator of the Year: St. Julian Winery & Distillery

■ Economic Pioneer of the Year: Special-Lite

■ Legacy Award: Randall L. Peat

■ Best New Business of the Year: CozyTea

■ Best New Business of the Year Honorable Mention: M2 Real Estate Collective

"Businesses and municipalities across Cass and Van Buren counties continue to make remarkable progress and deserve recognition for their achievements," said Dan Peat, interim executive director of Market One, in the release. "We are honored to celebrate these organizations, whose innovation, resilience, and leadership play a vital role in strengthening our regional economy."

In addition to the award winners, Market One also recognized eight distinguished supporters as Torchbearer Investors for their support within the last year and contributions to the organization's mission.

These investors include city of Gobles, Invenergy, LaGrange Township, Pine Grove Township, Ralph Moyle Inc., SME-USA, The Barton Group and Willis Law.

"We are deeply grateful for the businesses and municipalities that choose to invest in Market One," said Chad Ritchie, chair of the Market One board, in the release. "Their continued support fuels meaningful progress – empowering us to expand programs, secure vital grant funding, and deliver the resources that help our employers and communities not only grow, but thrive."

Photo provided

The Van Buren County Democratic Party recently celebrated the opening of its new Paw Paw office with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Van Buren County Democratic Party unveils Paw Paw office

By TRIBUNE STAFF

PAW PAW — The Van Buren County Democratic Party recently celebrated the opening of its new Paw Paw office with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

According to a news release, The party's new office is located at 32849 W Red Arrow Hwy, Suite 300.

"The new office reflects the growing momentum of the Van Buren County Democratic Party as it expands its presence and strengthens connections with communities across the county," the release stated.

It is the party's second permanent location in Van Buren County, joining its existing office at 6 W Main St in Hartford, Mich. and a third location in South Haven is in the planning stages.

"We want this space to be more than a political office," County Party Chair Kerry Tapper said in the release. "Our goal is for it to be a place where neighbors can connect, learn about local issues and find meaningful ways to get involved in their community."

Staffed entirely by volunteers, the office serves as a hub for organizing, outreach and civic engagement. Residents can volunteer, pick up yard signs and campaign literature and learn about local candidates and issues.

The Paw Paw office also serves as a convenient drop-off location for local contributions to Democrats' monthly "DEMonstrate CommUNITY" charity drives.

For office hours and more information, follow Van Buren Democrats on Facebook or visit www.vanburendems.org.

Dead baby found in portable toilet at a music festival in Michigan

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ROTHBURY, Mich. — The body of a baby was found inside a portable toilet at a music festival in rural Michigan over the weekend, prompting police to ask the public for help.

The child was less than a month old, Michigan State Police said, and its remains were discovered by a bathroom company employee during routine maintenance Sunday morning, the last day of the Electric Forest festival.

Authorities have not said how the baby died, whether it was a boy or a girl, or whether a parent, guardian or person connected to the baby has been identified.

An autopsy was completed on Monday and police would provide updates once those results are reviewed by investigators, Michigan State Police Lt. Pat Agema said. So far, the death has not been classified as a homicide, Agema said Tuesday.

The festival began Thursday and typically draws tens of thousands of people for electronic dance music and jam bands. Most attendees camp at the 2,000-acre Double JJ Resort near the shores of Lake Michigan. Police said the body was found in the festival's camping area, and are seeking any possible witnesses or people with relevant information.

Festival organizers shared the state police post about the death on Monday, saying "it causes us so much pain to have to share this difficult news with you." Organizers joined the call from police to help with the investigation, urging festival attendees to "assist in any way."

Organizers did not immediately return a message seeking comment Tuesday.

The general admission campground during the first day of Electric Forest music festival at the Double JJ Resort on June 19, 2025 in Rothbury.

Joel Bissell / Kalamazoo Gazette

Don Campbell / PMG file photo

Court Place Plaza in downtown St. Joseph will soon host a new St. Joseph Today event series called "Family Night at the Plaza." It is expected to feature family-friendly programming like a magic night and youth concert.

A new event series

St. Joseph Today to host family nights in Court Place Plaza

By LAUREN RICE
Paxton Media Group

ST. JOSEPH — Families can find a new source of evening entertainment this summer at "Family Night in the Plaza" hosted by St. Joseph Today.

In partnership with Silver Harbor Brewing Co. and the United Way of Southwest Michigan, St. Joseph Today is coordinating family-friendly event programming from 5-8 p.m. every Wednesday at Court Place Plaza, starting July 8.

"We want to provide family-friendly and fun programming on Wednesday nights and hopefully get people out to enjoy a good time," St. Joseph Today Executive Director Paul Knapp said. "It would be a different theme every week."

Knapp said not every program is set in stone yet, but he is expecting a magic night, a youth concert night and an instrument petting zoo, with the help of Citadel Dance & Music Center.

"There's a lot of fun stuff that we're thinking through to try to make it a great night where you can come out and get dinner, grab a drink in the social district and have fun as a family down at Court Place Plaza," he said.

This event series will replace Wednesday night markets, which were previously held at the plaza to host local artists and crafters.

"It felt like an opportunity to do something more family-oriented was a great use of that space for the summer, and we hope that in time, we could build some momentum off of this event and it would spill into the rest of downtown," Knapp said.

That momentum could turn into something to the tune of "local's night" in the downtown.

Knapp said it would be an opportunity for families to go out and grab dinner, a social district drink, maybe do some shopping or find ice cream for dessert and enjoy their city.

"What starts as family night in Court Place Plaza may grow in the coming years to be family night in downtown and we could get more spaces and venues in downtown participating in something similar," he said. "There's not a clear vision yet for what that looks like, just a lot of hope that Wednesday nights could grow into something bigger."

He also said partnerships with businesses and organizations interested in participating in something like that would be helpful.

Later this year, the plaza itself could be due for an upgrade. The city recently approved a professional services agreement to task Cornerstone Alliance with managing the renovation of the plaza, including everything from landscaping to interactive elements and picnic tables with umbrellas.

Those projects likely would not interfere with the timeline of family night at the plaza because it is anticipated to start late in the year. Family nights are scheduled until mid-August.

The first family night in the plaza is from 5-8 p.m. Wednesday, July 8 at Court Place Plaza near The Market and Silver Harbor Brewing Co.

Contact: lrice@TheHP.com, 932-0360.

Health in Harmony.
125 years ago, Bronson began with a promise. What started as one hospital has grown into a symphony of care - each milestone adding a new note, each team strengthening the harmony. Across southwest Michigan, our hospitals, providers and teams move in step, guided by one mission: the health of our communities.
This anniversary is more than a celebration; it's a reaffirmation. Through innovation, investment and an unwavering commitment to safety, we continue to strengthen every hospital and community we serve because world-class care should always be in harmony, and never far from home.
Bronson | Health in Harmony | 125 Years Strong
bronsonhealth.com/125
BRONSON

Send in news!

Readers are encouraged to submit news tips, story ideas and photos to the South Haven Tribune. Visit us online at www.southhaventribune.net or call 269-637-1104.

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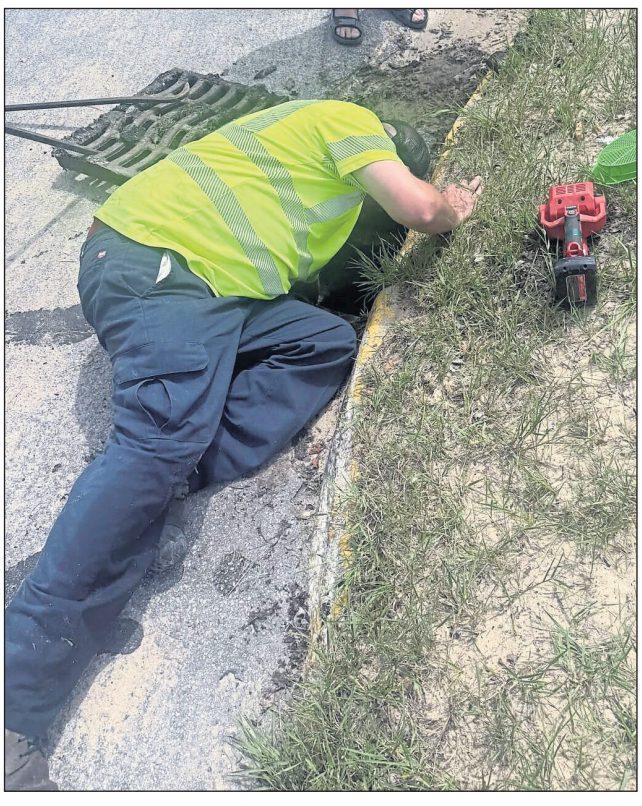


Photos provided / Facebook

The South Haven water and sewer staff recently rescued ducklings from a storm drain.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Ongoing events

Visually impaired and blind persons support group meeting: Every third Wednesday of the month at 1 p.m. at Senior Services of Van Buren County.

Dementia and Alzheimer's caregivers support group meeting: Every third Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. at Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church library.

Three Blondes Brewing: Trivia night on Thursdays at 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. and Sundays at 1 p.m. and 2 p.m.

Sparkle and Spice Boutique: Mom and Me play date. Fridays from 9 to 10 a.m.

South Haven Center for the Arts: Center Studio for adults from 6-8 p.m. on the first and third Wednesday of the month. Artists of any level can bring their own projects to work on. Basic art supplies will be available. Attendees must be 18 years old and over. Members are free, non-members cost $5.

South Haven Center for the Arts: Center Studio for ages 9 to 13 from 4-5:30 p.m. every Wednesday. Young artists are invited to create art at their own pace with an instructor to help guide as needed. Free workshop but a $10 donation is suggested to help cover cost of supplies.

Candlelight Yoga: Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Church of Epiphany. Cost is $15.

Food pantry: First Congregational Church open from 10 a.m. to noon on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. It is a drive-up food pantry.

Food pantry: Sacred Heart Catholic Church. For Bangor residents only. Open from 1 to 4 p.m. on Thursdays.

Food, clothing, baby pantry: Lily of the Valley Church in Covert. Open from noon to 2 p.m. on Wednesdays. Must call the central office to register.

Personal care and clothing pantry: First Assembly of God open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesdays. Must call the central office to register.

Baby pantry: Peace Lutheran Church open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. Must call the central office to register.

Baby pantry: Simpson United Methodist Church in Bangor. Open from 10 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays. Must call the central office to register.

HawksHead: Pasta on the Patio every Wednesday at 5 p.m.

Michigan Maritime Museum: Hands-on the Harbor every Thursday at 10:30 a.m.

Lakeside Social Bowling Alley: Glow Bowl every Friday from noon to 9 p.m.

Bridge: Chicago Scoring at 1 p.m. on Tuesdays at the South Haven Memorial Library.

Bridge: Duplicate Scoring at 1 p.m. on Wednesdays at the South Haven Memorial Library.

First United Methodist Church: Free meals every Tuesday night. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. Meal is served at 6 p.m.

South Haven Memorial Library: Bridge Card Game from 1 to 4 p.m. every Tuesday and Wednesday. Open to the public. Beginners are welcome.

Covert Branch Library: After school art workshop for students grades 6 through 12 every Monday from 3 to 5 p.m.

South Haven Farmers Market: Open from 8 a.m. to 2pm on Saturdays, from May to October; and on Wednesdays from June through August.

South Haven Center for the Arts: National juried exhibition with the Arts and Aging Partnership of Southwest Michigan on display from June 20 to Aug. 1.

South Haven Memorial Library: Kids story time and yoga class at 10 a.m. on Mondays.

Michigan Maritime Museum: Fish tales storytime from 11 a.m. to noon on Wednesdays.

July

4-5 – South Haven Center for the Arts: 67th annual South Haven art fair.

5 – Rotary Club: Pancake Breakfast from 7:30 a.m. to noon at the downtown pavilion.

6 – South Haven Memorial Library: Pasta Paleontology at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. Dig into science with a side of pasta. Use noodles and other materials to build and explore dinosaur bones and fossils in this hands-on STEM activity.

7 – South Haven Memorial Library: South Haven strummers from 6 to 7 p.m.

7 – Visit South Haven: Coffee with Kendra from 10 to 11 a.m. at the Visit South Haven Office.

8 – South Haven Memorial Library: Worm Hotel at 10:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Check in your wiggly guests. Build your own worm habitat and learn how these underground creatures help our earth thrive.

8 – Area Agency on Aging: Dementia-friendly movie "Grease" at 11:30 a.m. at the Michigan Theatre.

8 – South Haven Memorial Library: Hooked on Yarn from 1 to 3:30 p.m.

9 – South Haven Area Young Professionals: monthly social networking event from 5:50 to 6:30 p.m. at Captain Lou's.

9 – South Haven Memorial Library: Storytime at 11 a.m. Make a dinosaur excavation kit.

10 – Lakeside Social: Glow Bowling from noon to 9 p.m.

10 – South Haven Memorial Library: Preschool Art at 11 a.m. Sarah Rydecki will lead preschoolers and their adults in hands on art activities. programing will be geared towards 3 to 5 year olds.

10 – Michigan Maritime Museum: Maritime makers craft activity event from 1 to 3 p.m.

11 – South Haven Garden Club: Annual garden walk from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Starting at Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum South Haven featuring garden tours, flower/plant Sale, gift boutique and treasure barn.

11 – South Haven Memorial Library: Tot Shabbat hosted by First Hebrew Congregation of South Haven from 5 to 6 p.m.

11 – Al Van Humane Society: monthly meet and greet from noon to 2 p.m. at Tractor Supply Co.

11 – Michigan Flywheelers Museum: Firing up of the House of David engine completing the final stretch of the Black River Railroad from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

12 – American Legion Post 49: Sunday breakfast buffet from 8 a.m. to noon. Cost $10.

12 – South Haven Dragon Boat Association: Dragon Boat social paddle from 2:30 to 4 p.m. Check-in begins at 2:30 p.m. Cost $10, first visit is free.

13 – South Haven Memorial Library: Kids Bingo at 5 p.m. Grab your dabbers and get ready for a roaring good time. Join us for a few rounds of Bingo with prizes.

14 – South Haven Memorial Library: Preschool storytime at 11 a.m. Books, rhymes and wiggles – dino style. Preschool storytime features age-appropriate stories and activities for our littlest explorers.

15 – South Haven Memorial Library: Friends of the South Haven library meeting from 2 to 3 p.m. Public is welcome.

16 – South Haven Memorial Library: Storytime at 11 a.m. and design a dinosaur necklace.

16 – Lake Michigan College: vegetable garden session two from 5:30 to 7 p.m. at the hoop house at the South Haven campus. Cost $15 for each session.

26 – South Haven Memorial Library: Riverfront concert series at 6 p.m. Bubble activity before the concert provided by the library.

17 – South Haven Memorial Library: Movie – Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs at 2 p.m.

18 – South Haven Theatre Series: "Audrey Hepburn" written and performed by Leslie Goddard, Ph.D. at 7:30 p.m. at Listiak High School auditorium. Tickets cost $15 with free admission for students.

18 – Senior Services of Van Buren County: 4th annual gala at 5 p.m. Food, dancing and auction. Tickets on sale for $25.

19 – First Congregational UCC: Soul Food Experience with dinner and concert featuring Serita's Black Rose Duo at 5 p.m. Cost $20, reservations required by July 12.

20 – South Haven Memorial Library: Tie dye from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Get colorful and a little messy. Create your own tie dye masterpiece to wear all summer long.

22 – South Haven Memorial Library: Dinosaur trivia at 6 p.m. Think you know your dinos? Put your prehistoric knowledge to the test in a fun evening of dinosaur trivia and friendly competition.

22 – South Haven Memorial Library: Hooked on Yarn from 1 to 3:30 p.m.

23 – South Haven Memorial Library: Storytime at 11 a.m. and enjoy salt dough fossils.

24 – South Haven Memorial Library: Messy art at 11 a.m. Head outside for some seriously fun, seriously messy art-making. This special outdoor session at the pavilion is all about creativity without limits.

24 – South Haven Performance Series: featuring Vox GR at 7 p.m. at Peace Lutheran Church.

24 – South Haven Memorial Library: Movie – The Good Dinosaur at 2 p.m.

26 – South Haven Dragon Boat Association: Dragon Boat social paddle from 2:30 to 4 p.m. Check-in begins at 2:30 p.m. Cost $10, first visit is free.

27 – South Haven Memorial Library: Kids Bingo at 5 p.m. Grab your dabbers and get ready for a roaring good time. Join us for a few rounds of Bingo with prizes.

28 – South Haven Memorial Library: Preschool storytime at 11 a.m. Books, rhymes and wiggles – dino style. Preschool storytime features age-appropriate stories and activities for our littlest explorers.

28 – Historical Association of South Haven: Old-fashioned ice cream social from 2 to 4 p.m. featuring ice cream from DeGrandchamp's Farm Store and the Casco Band. The event will take place on the lawn at Hartman School, 355 Hubbard St.

29 – South Haven Memorial Library: Glitter dino jars at 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. Create a sparkling glitter jar featuring your favorite dinosaur to take home as a dazzling keepsake.

30 – South Haven Memorial Library: Storytime at 11 a.m. Join us for the last storytime of summer reading that includes a mystery dinosaur craft/

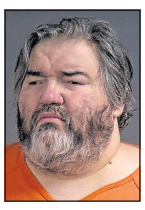
30 – South Haven Memorial Library: Henna art at 6 p.m. Registration is required.

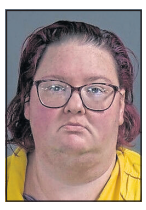
31 – Michigan Maritime Museum: Maritime makers craft activity event from 1 to 3 p.m.

31 – South Haven Memorial Library: Glow in the dark art from noon to 4 p.m. End summer reading with a bang and a glow. Create a luminous work of art that comes alive in the dark during this special drop-in event.

Parents charged with murder in death of 7-year-old son who weighed 255 pounds

By JAMIE STENGLE
Associated Press


D. O'BRIEN


J. O'BRIEN

The parents of a 7-year-old Michigan boy who weighed 255 pounds when he died have been charged with murder, torture and child abuse, prosecutors said.

"Clearly the parents were feeding the child improperly, to say the least," Genesee County Prosecutor David Leyton said Monday. "He wasn't getting the nutrition he needed."

Casper O'Brien died last November after first responders were called to the family's home in Flint because he'd stopped breathing, prosecutors said. His parents – Damien O'Brien, 40, and Jessica O'Brien, 41 – have each been charged with second-degree murder, torture and three counts of second-degree child abuse.

The couple were arraigned last week and are being held on no bond in jail in Genesee County, about an hour's drive northwest of Detroit. A probable cause hearing is set for Thursday.

The child, who was 4 feet, 2.5 inches tall, was medically classified as obese, according to the Genesee County Medical Examiner's report. His cause of death was listed as dilated cardiomyopathy, with his weight being a contributing condition. Dilated cardiomyopathy happens when the heart becomes enlarged and weakened and can't efficiently pump blood, which can affect other body systems including the lungs.

According to the criminal complaints, the parents failed to take Casper for treatment even though the family had health care.

Elias Fanous, an attorney representing Damien O'Brien, said in a statement that he wouldn't speculate on the case's circumstances and had no comment beyond saying that his client was "innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law." An attorney for Jessica O'Brien did not immediately return a request for comment Monday.

Leyton said authorities believe Casper just consumed "a steady diet of snack foods." He said Casper, who was nonverbal and bedridden, had severe bed sores and various rashes.

The autopsy report said law enforcement and Child Protective Services reported there were piles of trash in the home, and Casper was not enrolled in school. Leyton said the hoarding in the home was "terrible."

One of the child abuse charges relates to the couple's 5-year-old daughter, who was placed in foster care.

Casper last saw his primary care provider in February 2024, according to the autopsy report, when he was diagnosed with a cough, congestion and metabolic disease. At that visit, he weighed 104 pounds, and his mother was given information on a healthy diet and exercise, according to the report, which said he was referred to a pediatric endocrinologist but never saw one. The report said the metabolic disease wasn't specified in available medical records.

"It's a very, very sad and tragic situation," Leyton said. "I've been the prosecuting attorney for 22 years and I thought I'd seen it all but I've never seen anything quite like this."

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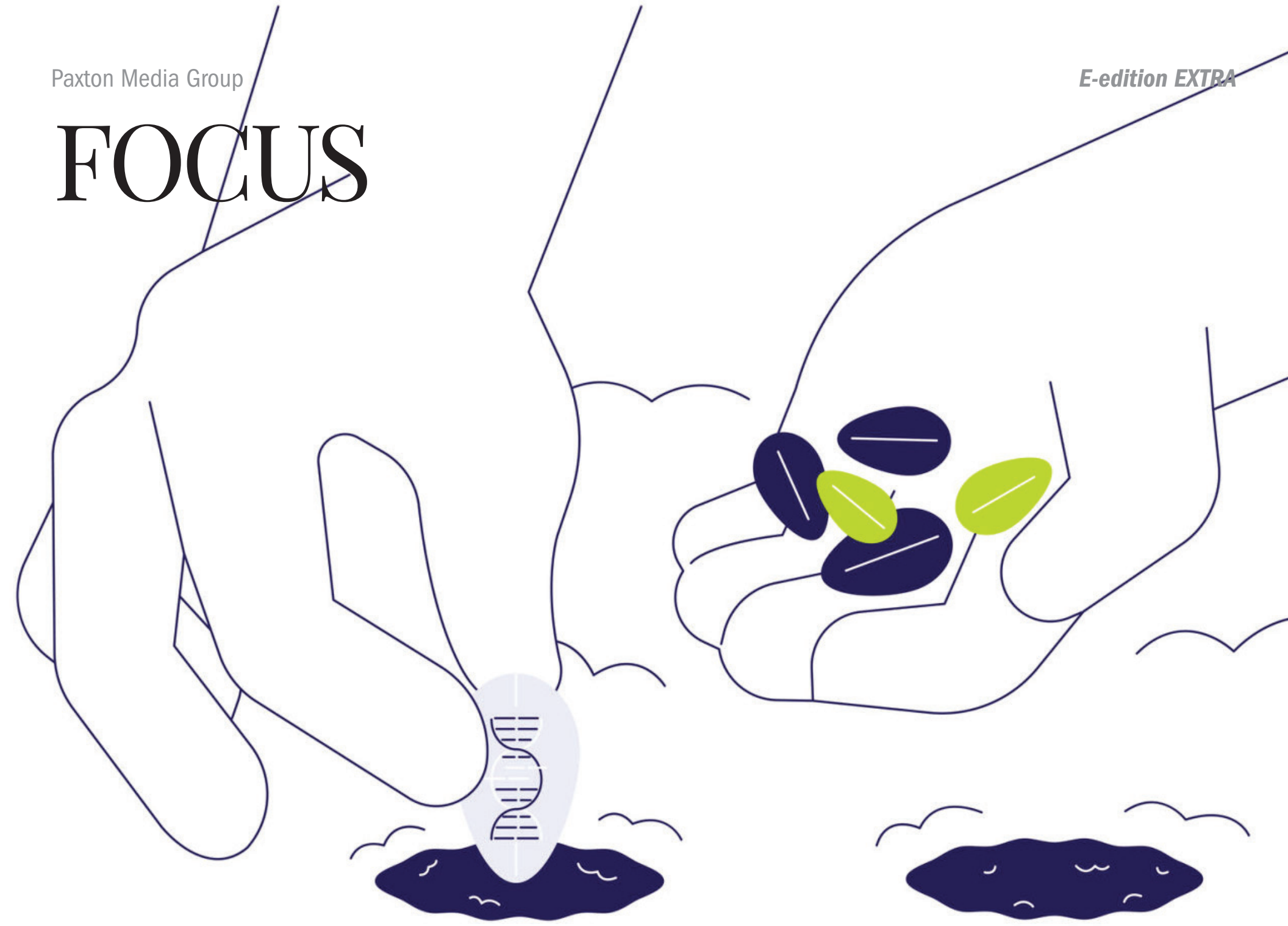

Visual Generation / Getty Images

How everyone pays the cost for patents on seeds, and private companies get rich from keeping them secret

By VARIOUS AUTHORS
(the Conversation)

THE CONVERSATION

The United States is one of only a handful of countries that allows companies to hold patents on plant varieties. As a result, a small number of corporations can – and do – suppress competition in the seed industry, stifle innovation and turn taxpayer subsidies intended for farmers into corporate profits.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has found that two companies control more than 70 percent of U.S. corn and soybean seed sales, and the top four cottonseed companies control nearly 94 percent of that market.

In a May 2026 court filing in a legal dispute between two U.S. seed companies, the Department of Justice said patents on seeds are obstructing competition and research in the agriculture industry.

As researchers who work on plant breeding and seed policy, we have seen how that plays out. When huge companies assert their patents, smaller businesses and public plant breeders who often lack the legal resources to fight back are frequently dissuaded from conducting research and development that might actually not be illegal at all.

And a lack of competition allows dominant companies – not always based in the U.S. – to collect large sums of taxpayer money that Congress allocated in hopes it would help farmers, not shareholders' and executives' bottom lines.

A shift in ownership

For most of human agricultural history, farmers freely saved, exchanged and planted seeds season after season, creating a diversity of crops suited to the places and people who grew them.

While some communities restricted the exchange of seeds for cultural or ceremonial reasons, seeds were broadly understood to be a shared resource. Even as recently as the 1970s, most plant breeding was carried out by public researchers at government stations and universities, while private companies focused on producing and selling those varieties at scale.

That diverse and decentralized system also served as an invisible insurance policy against disease and disaster: If one variety failed, there were plenty of others distinct enough to fill its place.

Beginning in the 20th century, though, governments began to grant companies patents on living organisms, beginning with a genetically engineered bacterium that broke down crude oil. Suddenly, chemical and pharmaceutical companies saw opportunities to earn money by engineering specific traits, such as herbicide tolerance, into key crop plants, including corn, soybeans, cotton and canola, and patenting those varieties.

Then they used those patent rights to prohibit other plant breeders, even university researchers, from conducting research and breeding with their seeds and to forbid farmers from saving their own seeds from one season to the next.

Those steps eliminated seed companies' two most obvious sources of competition: other developers building on their work and farmers saving seed. The seed companies then had enough market power to set prices so high they took nearly all of farmers' potential profits, while leaving them just enough of a margin to remain customers.

According to a report from the Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service, the price for genetically engineered seeds has more than quintupled since 1990, rising by 463 percent. But over that same period of time, the price farmers have received for their crops has increased only by 56 percent.

Subsidies get diverted

When the prices farmers receive for certain crops fall below a certain threshold, or when farmers suffer losses from bad weather or unexpected trade disputes, the Department of Agriculture has a multitude of programs that offer payments to make up the difference.

But that money tends to spend little time in farmers' pockets.

An August 2025 study shows that when farm subsidies increase, seed companies respond by raising their prices, charging based on what farmers can afford to pay rather than their own cost of producing and marketing the seed. Specifically, for every 1 percent increase in farm subsidies, seed companies raise their prices by 0.5%.

And when farmers go to sell their crops to grain processors, those companies benefit from being able to purchase commodity grains, such as corn, soybeans and canola, at a predictable price, held low because subsidies help farmers produce an abundant supply at margins that would otherwise drive farms out of business.

Testifying at an October 2025 Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on competition issues in the seed and fertilizer industries, Iowa farmer Noah Coppess put it plainly: "The reality in farming today is we're price takers rather than price makers. That's especially true when consolidation limits our options. … I have concerns with our input and equipment supply chains and their ability to manipulate our costs."

The result is a system in which public money intended for farmers is redistributed to the seed suppliers and commodity purchasers who profit on either side of them.

Limiting research

Dominant seed companies prevent competitors from developing new breeding programs through a complex web of patents and restrictive licensing contracts that make it nearly impossible to acquire enough genetic material to get started.

The patent system is built on the premise that applicants must completely disclose how their inventions were made in order to get protection. This allows the public to understand the scope of the invention, as well as to improve upon it.

Genetic analyses on the protected seeds would be required to understand how a variety was bred and the genetic traits it contains. However, seed companies have also threatened independent researchers with patent-infringement lawsuits. Those threats prevent independent researchers from studying the crops that make up the country's supply of food, feed, fuel and fiber.

The result is that no one outside of the dominant companies, not even the U.S. government, knows which economically crucial crops, most of which are grown from patented seeds, might be vulnerable to emerging pests and pathogens. For years, plant breeders have been calling for genetic assessments of these seeds and the crops they grow; to date, no such studies have been conducted.

A shift in direction

But the May 2026 Justice Department court filing saying seed patents are blocking agricultural competition and research indicates the tide may be turning.

In 2023, multinational agrochemical company Corteva sued a genetic engineering startup, Inari, for infringing its patents by, among other things, obtaining samples of Corteva's patented seeds from a public repository and analyzing their genetic makeup.

Though the Justice Department didn't weigh in favor of either company, its court filing said companies should not be able to restrict the public from sequencing genetic material that was deposited as part of the process of securing patent protection.

Notably, the department's court filing came from the Antitrust Division rather than the Civil Division, which usually handles intellectual property issues. That difference suggests that the government sees this extension of patent rights as an illegitimate way for a company to exclude other companies from competing.

The case is still winding its way through the legal process. But if the judge agrees, his decision could be consequential. For starters, competitors could begin to understand the strengths and weaknesses in seed varieties on the market and find ways to build on that innovation, which is precisely the type of activity the patent system was designed to encourage.

More competition in the market could provide an important check on seed prices, reducing the burden on American farmers and, thereby, taxpayers. Finally, researchers could conduct the studies that are needed to begin rebuilding the kind of genetic knowledge that was, for most of human history, held in common – an insurance policy in the best interest of us all.

Julie Dawson, Professor of Plant and Agroecosystem Sciences, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Kiki Hubbard, Researcher, Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison; and Paulina Jenney, Research Coordinator, Urban and Regional Food System Program, University of Wisconsin-Madison all contributed to this report

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FOCUS

Heat waves can leave homes dangerously hot – even for young, healthy adults

By ZOLTAN NAGY
Professor of Building Services, Eindhoven University of Technology (The Conversation)

Most people know that heat waves can be dangerous. What they may not realize is that the heat indoors can be much worse than outdoors.

When the power goes out and air conditioning stops, a house starts to function like a greenhouse. Heat enters through windows and walls and has nowhere to go. Air stagnates.

Within hours, indoor temperatures can climb well above what the thermometer shows outside, especially on upper floors and in rooms with south-facing windows. Over longer periods, especially if temperatures don't cool off overnight, conditions can become lethal.

Most heat-related deaths occur indoors. When a heat dome sent temperatures soaring in the Pacific Northwest in 2021, 98 percent of the more than 600 deaths in British Columbia happened inside homes. Washington and Oregon also saw high numbers of deaths in homes that lacked air conditioning.

In Europe, where only 1 in 10 households have air conditioning, heat waves killed an estimated 60,000 people in 2022 and 47,000 in 2023, largely inside buildings never designed for these temperatures.

People of all ages are at risk in heat waves like these. I spent eight years at the University of Texas at Austin studying how buildings respond to extreme heat. In a recent study, my team assessed the heat risk in every single-family home in Austin.

We found that even younger, healthy adults face far more risk than they realize.

How hot is too hot for a human body?

Your body maintains a core temperature of about 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit. To cool down, it pushes blood to the skin and sweats. But when air temperature is high, that convective cooling weakens. When humidity is also high, sweat cannot evaporate.

If the body has no way to release heat, core temperature rises. If the core temperature increases past about 104 F, the body's thermoregulation starts to fail. Past 109 F, death becomes likely.

What makes indoor heat especially dangerous is that it does not let up at night in homes that lack air conditioning. Outdoor temperatures typically drop after sunset, and someone outside can get a few hours of recovery. But a poorly insulated home that has been absorbing heat all day releases that heat slowly, keeping indoor temperatures elevated through the night. A person inside the home never gets a break.

After two or three nights of this, even healthy people start to be at serious risk for heat-related illnesses.

Why homes heat up more than people expect

People tend to underestimate indoor heat for a few reasons.

One is that the thermostat typically sits on one wall in one room. It does not tell what the temperature is in an upstairs bedroom or near a sun-facing window. In older, underinsulated homes, the actual felt temperature can exceed 90 F even when a thermostat reads 75 F. The hot walls, ceilings and windows can radiate heat directly onto your body.

Another reason is that people assume all homes respond to heat the same way. However, a newer home with double-pane windows and good insulation acts like a thermos, keeping heat out for a longer time. An older home with single-pane windows and cracks in the walls heats up fast.

Two houses on the same street, exposed to the same outdoor conditions, can have completely different temperatures inside. And in a blackout, where neither home has cooling, those differences can become a matter of life and death.

What we found in Austin

Our study combined two datasets. From Austin's tax appraisal records, we pulled basic property information, such as the year the home was built, the size and the number of stories for each of the city's 213,000 single-family homes. We then matched each home to the most similar energy simulation models in a U.S. Department of Energy database that contains thousands of detailed, physics-based building energy models representing the U.S. residential building stock.

Using those models, we simulated each building's indoor temperatures over time during a three-day heat wave and power outage with outdoor temperatures above 110 F.

We found that 85 percent of homes got hot enough to pose a significant risk of death for an elderly occupant. But what surprised us was the risk to younger people.

Under today's climate conditions in Austin, about 15 percent of homes already have the potential to get hot enough without air conditioning to pose serious heat risks to healthy adults. Under future warming scenarios, that number jumps to as high as 65 percent if average summer highs reach 104 F. Further, climate projections for Austin show that heat waves will double in frequency by the end of the century.

We found three types of buildings and accompanying risks:

Resilient homes, which are newer and well insulated, tended to have temperature and humidity conditions that would be survivable for an elderly occupant throughout the simulated heat wave with blackout.

Critical-risk buildings, which are mostly older homes, became dangerous almost immediately.

And then there was the middle group – homes where temperatures rose slowly during the simulated blackout, day by day, possibly giving occupants a false sense of security until it was too late.

Texas has already seen conditions like our case study's – a heat wave paired with a power outage. In 2024, a derecho knocked out power for nearly 900,000 Houston households while the heat index climbed to 100 F. Seven weeks later, Hurricane Beryl cut power to 2.6 million homes, leaving them without power for over three days, with temperatures over 90 F.

What you can do to stay safe

If you can't get cooling at home, there are steps you can take that can help.

Move to the lowest floor of your home, where it will be coolest. Close the blinds and curtains on sun-facing windows. Drink water constantly to stay hydrated, which is essential for regulating body temperature.

If you're facing a blackout, be sure to also check on elderly neighbors, especially those living alone. You can also try to find a public cooling center; many cities now open them during heat emergencies.

Longer term, upgrades such as reflective window film, attic insulation and lighter-colored roofing can reduce how much a home heats up. After the 2021 heat dome, British Columbia's coroner recommended updating building codes to address heat.

Our own findings point in the same direction: We propose that new homes should be required by building codes to maintain conditions in which at least light physical activity remains possible for all occupants for at least 72 hours during a power outage.

As summers get hotter with climate change and blackouts become more frequent, the risks of people suffering heat illnesses will only continue to rise.

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FOCUS

Kamryn McPhaul, 22, of Chicago's Rogers Park neighborhood, browses inside Women & Children First bookstore in Andersonville on May 31. McPhaul has been limiting herself to an hour a day of phone usage since February and is spending more time exploring on solo trips or with friends.

Josh Boland / Chicago Tribune / TNS

Breaking free from phones

In nightlife venues and college classrooms alike, young people search for ways to leave their phones behind

By AUDREY PACHUTA
Chicago Tribune (TNS)

CHICAGO — There's something addictive about it. Sitting in bed late at night watching one 30-second clip after another. Bright, blue light illuminating the room.

Whipping out a camera the moment a restaurant server brings a meal or a favorite performer appears onstage. Succumbing to the urge to scroll Instagram the second conversation grows quiet or social awkwardness creeps in.

The alarm bells began to ring in recent Loyola University graduate Kamryn McPhaul's head when she realized a third of her waking life was spent on her cellphone.

She, like so many others, craved the "cheap hits of dopamine," the sense of mindless joy she received from watching a short video only to forget it moments later.

Earlier this year, she decided enough was enough.

Goodbye to Instagram and Snapchat; hello to sightseeing adventures, solo trips to the movies and hours spent at the Art Institute. The moment McPhaul installed a "permanent black-and-white filter" on her screen and deleted all her social media apps, she felt something shift. She doesn't plan on going back.

While McPhaul's mission to curb her screen time has been an individual endeavor, others are increasingly seeking out social spaces to join like-minded people hoping to unplug. The number of phone-free experiences grew by 567 percent globally in 2024 and 2025, according to Eventbrite, a platform where organizers can advertise events.

In Chicago, this trend has taken various forms: everything from creative spaces relegating devices to cotton bags and locked boxes to phone-free raves moshing into the morning's wee hours.

Some of these events are planned and attended by young adults, most of whom hardly remember a world before instantaneous digital communication. In many cases, phone-free parties emerge in the form of novelty pop-ups, advertised as a chance to escape the pressures of an ever-demanding online universe.

"Some people want to let loose and be free and they don't want to be filmed while they're doing that," said 29-year-old Samantha Boehlen, an event producer who helped plan multiple phone-free dance parties around the city.

'How all of our parents hung out'

After acquiring her first iPhone at 13, Olivia Gork spent most of her young life wondering what a party free of digital disruption would look like.

She dreamed of dance floors packed with crowds who let music move through them. Bars where people entered as strangers and left as friends. But the more she went out, the more she realized phones inherently stood in the way of the experience she longed to have.

D'Jhanir Harris Smith, 22 walks with his partner Kamryn McPhaul, 22, in Chicago's Andersonville neighborhood on May, 31. "We are in Chicago where it's such a fun city to be young in, explore things and where so much social infrastructure is built." McPhaul said.

"I was ending the night just being like: Where were we?" Gork said. "Were we just capturing the moments or were we living them?"

Unbeknownst to her, Gork's vision was one she shared with event producer Chinaecherem Nwaubani, whom she met at North Coast Music Festival in 2024. Now business partners, the pair founded an agency, Saturnalia, to plan "otherworldly phone free(dom) gatherings."

Back in December, they hosted their first and only party to date at Fulton Street Collective, a West Town art gallery and event space. The event, with bright colorful fabrics draped from the ceiling, drew a crowd of more than 100 people, Nwaubani said.

Some came with friends and others came alone, but all followed the night's one rule: Phones must be kept in a locked box by the entrance.

"We debated putting them in little pouches, but something for me is that I just hate being encumbered and I was just like, what is a way that everyone can be as unencumbered as possible?" Gork, now 23, said. "I think the phone just needs to be completely locked up."

The zero-tolerance phone policy brought people together in ways even Gork and Nwaubani couldn't have predicted. They were particularly struck by a moment when a group gathered to play chess with a security guard, and the fact that one attendee got so caught up in being screen-free, she forgot her phone at the venue when she departed for the night.

"This is how all of our parents hung out," Nwaubani said. "There was a time not that long ago where this was just normal."

Boehlen, the 29-year-old event producer whose work ranges from creative collage clubs to nightlife, said she wishes she had been "more stringent" about phone usage when she helped plan a January dance party in Wicker Park.

Over the years, she has advertised many of her events as being "phone-free," but unlike the owners of Saturnalia, she never enforced the rule as anything more than a friendly suggestion.

Recently, she said, she attended a few events that weren't marketed as screen-free, but ended up operating that way once she arrived. She recalled a concert's policy of storing phones in automatically sealed bags as something that could be a good idea for her future functions.

"I think people can use their phone as a crutch," Boehlen said. "It's very easy to look down at your phone and just scroll or answer a text message, rather than sitting in that uncomfortability."

Phone-free creative spaces

For some, the notion of unplugging isn't a new idea. With its eclectic collection of vinyl records and board games, Kibbitznest, a WiFi-free book bar in Lincoln Park, has been capturing the fancies of those seeking a digital detox for nearly a decade.

While phones are technically permitted inside, those visiting find themselves hard-pressed to spot anyone choosing to use them. Instead, groups gather on comfortable furniture and chat while sipping cocktails and dealing playing cards. The dark interior features walls covered with books of every genre, encouraging those who enter to keep their laptop tucked away for the sake of the written word.

One weeknight in May, around 30 people gathered for an event called "Skip the Small Talk" in Kibbitznest's back room. As the name suggests, the night was centered around facilitating deep conversations between strangers, a task much easier when phone usage is kept to a minimum, event organizers said.

"Wouldn't it be nice if people just talked to people?" Viviana Barajas, the 33-year-old emcee, asked the crowd at the top of the event.

Over two hours, attendees shuffled from partner to partner, engaging in 10-minute conversations centered around card-prompted topics like "What are some of your biggest hopes for your personal future?" and "What are some things you loved about yourself as a child?"

Though attendee Lindsey Lucenta doesn't consider herself addicted to her phone, she said she believes "our relationship with phones as a society has oriented people away from engaging genuinely." She appreciated the opportunity to step into a space like the small talk event because it allowed those around her to be more "authentically themselves."

Jessa Fuller, an event curator and co-founder of experiential marketing agency Little Council, sought to cultivate a similar sense of belonging when her team hosted a phone-free pop-up event on a Saturday morning in River North last month.

The event, called Fulfillment Center, was geared toward people of all ages who were encouraged to come, put their phone in a cotton bag and engage with one of the many activities centered around reading, writing, making and playing at a long, communal table.

"Right now, when you think of a fulfillment center, you think of a large, giant, warehouse-y building built to get us things we order online super fast," Fuller said. "So we said: 'What would it look like if … we took up space with one that was more focused on personal fulfillment?'"

Fuller's team hosted the pop-up over two days. For her, the most striking part of the weekend was seeing people come to the Fulfillment Center alone and leave with plans to reconnect with the people they met at her event.

Students, teachers adapt in a digital world

For some, the conversation around limiting screen time has extended beyond social circles and into professional or academic ones.

This spring, Olivia Stewart Lester, a Loyola professor who typically teaches classes on the New Testament and early Christianity, proposed and taught a new class that investigated the intersection of religion and technology.

Eighteen students joined her for her semester-long passion project, together exploring topics such as artificial intelligence and online religious communities, as well as participating in a monthlong digital fast coinciding with the start of Lent and Ramadan.

"They were surprisingly enthusiastic," Stewart Lester said, adding she was unsure of how students would respond to a professor mandating a behavioral change.

In assigned reflection papers, students described how the fast gave them the chance to take up new hobbies, she said. Given the choice of how to implement the assignment in their lives, some students opted to eliminate certain apps like TikTok, while others chose not to use their devices on public transportation in order to be more aware of their surroundings.

"(They found) once they got through the kind of rocky adjustment period of getting used to detaching from those devices, that their mental health improved," she said. "That they were sleeping better and forming more connections with other people that felt more authentic to them."

At the University of Illinois Chicago, 20-year-old engineering student Nawar Masood sometimes employs the help of an app called FocusFlight, which allows her to lock her phone for the typical duration of any flight. Sometimes she chooses to turn off her phone for the two-hour flight path from Chicago to Atlanta, or if she really needs to focus, she'll opt for a longer hypothetical flight, such as one to San Francisco.

Even though she tries to limit her phone usage, Masood said her screen time can spike as high as 11 hours per day during the school year.

"A friend sent me a statistic that said we look at our phones over 200 times per day," Masood said. "I don't know if that's an exaggeration or not, but I just got super overwhelmed by that."

Now, she said, she and her friends place their phones in the center of the table when they're hanging out. Just before going to bed each night, she reserves an hour for reading or drawing to help her wind down without her phone nearby.

Back at Loyola, Stewart Lester said she has witnessed many students struggle to keep their screen time down in a world where both academics and social spheres increasingly demand an online presence. In her own classes, she restricts technology use to lecture-based notetaking, instructing her students to put everything away for activities and discussion.

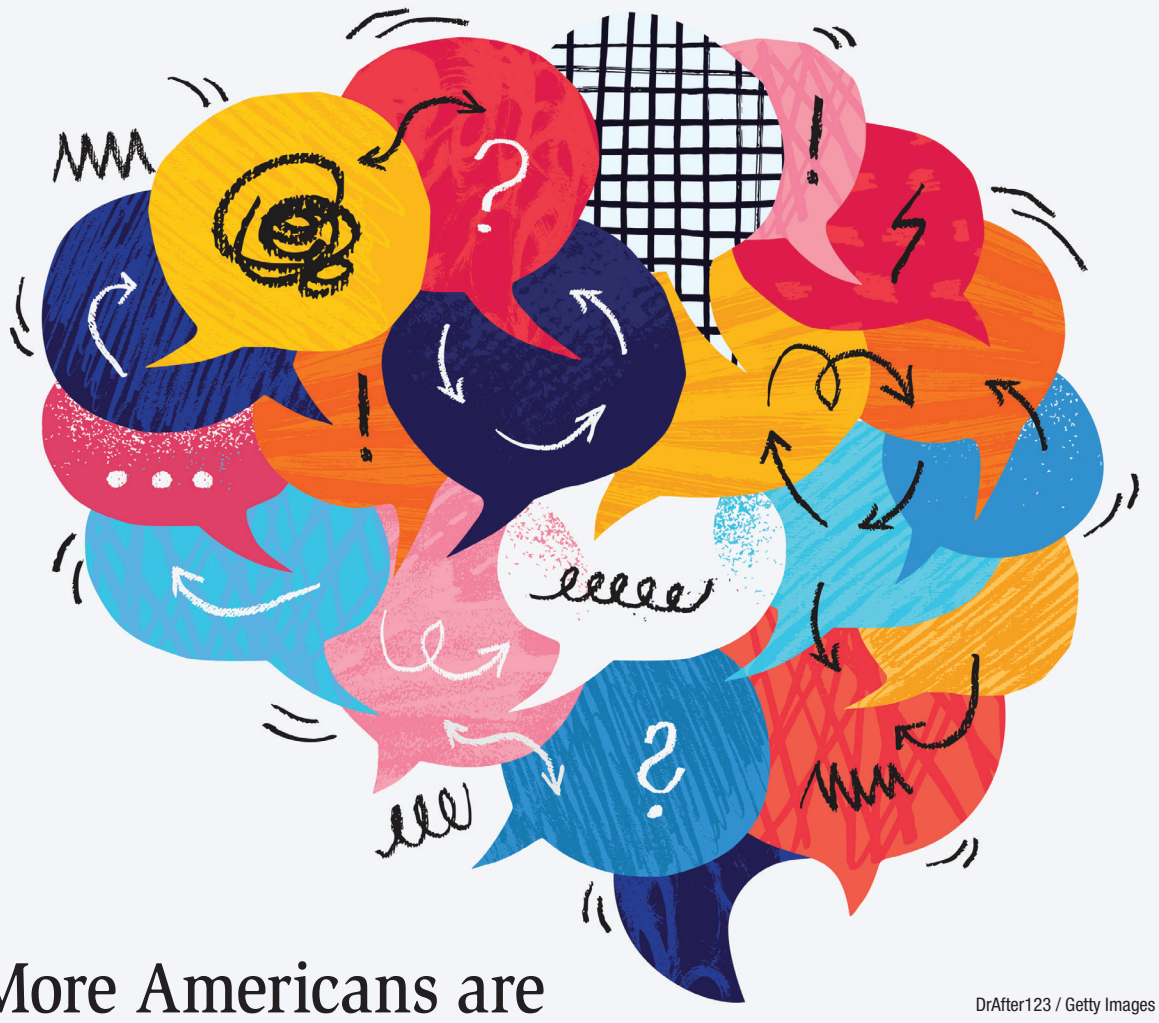
McPhaul, the recent Loyola graduate who did not take Stewart Lester's class but has been working independently to cut her screen time, said the past few months have been a blessing as she's learned to "hang out with herself" and engage meaningfully with her friends in a way she hasn't been able to before.

At 22, she recognizes that leaving social media behind all together probably isn't feasible for a young person hoping to maintain a social life in this day and age. And so, while McPhaul much prefers catching up with friends face-to-face, she said she reluctantly checks social media on her computer sometimes to ensure she doesn't miss anything too important.

She equates this strategy to what she called "AOL era," meaning she tries to limit her internet use to when she's at home, just as her mother would have done in the '90s.

"Our phones are programmed to be like a slot machine in our pockets," she said. "Before I had never thought about that, but it's just so true."

HEALTH



DrAfter123 / Getty Images

More Americans are **surviving cancer,** but **mental health challenges** can persist

By NATALIE KREBS
Iowa Public Radio/KFF Health News (TNS)

The cancer diagnosis came as a shock, disrupting Morgan Newman's plans for launching her life. It was 2015, and she was working as a dental assistant in Des Moines, Iowa, while studying to become a social worker.

After an abnormal result on her Pap smear, her doctor brought her back in to check the tissue for signs of cancer. Newman wasn't that concerned at first. She was only 24 years old.

"I didn't think anything of it," she said. Friends had received abnormal results, she recalled, "and they turned out to be OK."

But during the follow-up examination, she started bleeding so heavily that the doctor stopped the exam and immediately referred her to a gynecologic oncologist. Newman soon learned she had cervical cancer. She had just moved into her own apartment for the first time.

An increasing number of Americans are getting – and surviving – cancer. There were more than 18 million cancer survivors in the U.S. in 2025, and the National Cancer Institute estimates that number will grow to 22 million by 2035. But long after completing treatment, many survivors face lingering mental health challenges that go unaddressed.

Newman underwent six weeks of radiation and chemotherapy. Her scans after that were clear until the six-month mark, when her doctors found suspicious nodules in her lungs.

Newman endured additional chemotherapy, which had more side effects. It was physically exhausting. But she was also struggling psychologically as she watched her friends hit significant adult milestones.

"My friends were getting married, they were having children, you know, progressing in their lives and their careers, and I just felt stuck," she said.

Newman had done therapy before, for anxiety and depression. But after she got sick, she had to quit. Therapy was too expensive now that she had her other medical bills. And amid the doctor appointments, college courses, and her full-time job, she didn't have the time.

Newman's cancer treatment ended, and the scans remained clear. By 2017, she had a new job with better health benefits. So she decided she could go back to therapy.

She worried that every ache and pain could be the cancer coming back. At times, it was emotionally difficult to spend time with her friends who had kids, because the radiation treatment had damaged her reproductive system, leaving her unable to have her own children.

Now, almost 10 years later, Newman remains free of cancer, and cancer prevention has become her passion. She started a new job in December as the Iowa grassroots manager for the lobbying arm of the American Cancer Society, and she has served on the boards of other cancer organizations in Iowa.

Natalie Krebs / Iowa Public Radio / KFF Health News / TNS

Morgan Newman was diagnosed with stage 3 cervical cancer at age 24 but has been cancer free for a decade. She says she still deals with lingering fears of the cancer returning.

But she continues to go to therapy to deal with the lingering anxiety, as well as the lingering effects of her treatment, such as her infertility.

"The fear of the unknown really takes over and can physically impact your body, as well as your mind," she said. That question kept circling: "What if the cancer is back?"

Cancer's 'silent' impacts

Studiesshow cancer survivors experience anxiety and depression that can last years after they finish treatment.

The advocacy group Cancer Nation surveyed patients nationwide last year. It found that about a third of those who had finished treatment reported anxiety about their cancer potentially coming back, as well as problems with not feeling like their "old self." Only 1 in 5 of the surveyed survivors reported seeing a mental health professional.

Finding therapists who understand how cancer can affect people physically and emotionally can be a challenge, especially in states like Iowa. According to the Iowa Cancer Registry, the number of Iowans living five years after their diagnosis has increased about 0.4 percent each year since 2000, and the state has the second-highest rate of new cancer diagnoses. Researchers aren't sure why, but the University of Iowa scientists who run the registry are taking a deep dive into the issue in a two-year, state-funded project.

Iowa is also largely rural. Some of the counties that have the highest cancer rates also have the fewest mental health workers. Newman went through several therapists before she was able to get an appointment with Julie Larson, a Des Moines-based therapist who works with a lot of cancer survivors.

"I just felt like I needed something more specific to what I was going through," Newman said.

In Larson's practice, it's common for clients like Newman to start therapy months or even a year after finishing treatment, when they realize they aren't feeling how they expected to feel.

"Physically, people's bodies have changed," Larson said. "And they are reconciling loss and grief. And those experiences are a little bit more silent, a little more invisible, and friends and family don't often fully understand or grasp that."

Larson said cancer survivors often seek her out because she understands cancer and the different forms of treatment people may have experienced.

"I'm not a doctor, but I've done this a long time. So I know what happens when people have Adriamycin. I know the treatment protocol for carboplatin," she said, citing chemotherapy drugs.

Oncology and mental health

When it comes to treating cancer, the field of oncology often neglects mental health, said Patricia Ganz, an oncologist and professor at the UCLA School of Public Health who has spent decades doing research on cancer survivors and their lingering challenges.

"We know how to give pills. We know how to give pain medicine, sleep medicines. But we're not really schooled in the antidepressants," she said.

There's an increasing awareness about the need to screen for psychological distress in cancer patients and the need to provide mental health services for cancer patients and survivors, Ganz said, but expert-recommended screenings and referrals don't always happen to the extent they should.

The MercyOne Richard Deming Cancer Center in Des Moines has started offering services such as counseling, music therapy, and mindfulness sessions to reduce stress for those in and out of treatment.

"You get cared for intensely when you're getting treated for cancer," said Richard Deming, the medical director at the clinic named for him. By contrast, he said, when people complete treatment, the care typically shifts: "It's almost like, 'You should feel fortunate that you're cancer-free and just get on with your life.'"

To treat cancer comprehensively, Deming said, doctors need to pay attention to far more than just physical symptoms. That requires a shift in the way doctors treat patients, he said.

"Every step along the way, whether it's through diagnosis or treatment or follow-up, we have to ask, 'What are the issues you're experiencing?'" Deming said. "Not just: 'Do you have cancer? Did we get rid of the cancer?'"

This article is from a partnership that includes Iowa Public Radio, NPR, and KFF Health News. KFF Health News is a national newsroom that produces in-depth journalism about health issues and is one of the core operating programs of KFF – the independent source for health policy research, polling and journalism.

MAYO CLINIC Q&A

How is hip impingement affecting young adults?

By MAYO CLINIC NEWS NETWORK (TNS)

DEAR MAYO CLINIC: My nephew is in his 20s and has been complaining about ongoing hip pain, especially after working out. When it didn't improve, he saw an orthopedic specialist and was diagnosed with hip impingement. What is that?

ANSWER: Hip impingement, also called femoroacetabular impingement, is a condition that often affects young, active adults. It occurs when the shape of the hip joint causes the ball and socket to pinch during movement. Over time, that can lead to pain, stiffness and wear in the joint.

Hip impingement exists on a spectrum. Some people have changes in the shape of the hip and never develop symptoms. Others develop pain that begins to affect exercise, work or everyday activities.

The hip is a ball-and-socket joint. In some people, the socket may develop differently, or extra bone may form where the ball and neck of the femur meet. That extra bone on the femur is often called a cam lesion. These shape changes can cause the bones to come into contact earlier than they should during movement, especially when the hip is bent deeply during sitting, squatting or sports. This can lead to pain and reduced range of motion.

Hip impingement is much more recognized today. The condition became better understood in the early 2000s, when specialists began linking some cases of hip pain and early arthritis to structural differences in the hip joint. Young adults also may be active longer, which can make symptoms more noticeable. However, not everyone with hip impingement has symptoms.

The most common symptom is groin pain. Some people also describe pain that wraps around the side of the hip in a C-shaped pattern. Symptoms often become worse with prolonged sitting, long car rides or activities that involve deep hip flexion, such as deep squats or stepping onto a high surface.

Occasional pain that goes away may not need immediate evaluation. However, you should seek medical care if hip pain persists for weeks or months, begins to affect daily life, or prevents participation in activities you enjoy.

Sports and activities that involve deep hip bending, agility and pivoting can make symptoms more likely. This includes hockey, rowing, soccer, hurdles and some forms of dance, especially ballet.

Typically, hip impingement isn't something people are born with; the shape of the hip develops over time. The socket reaches its final shape relatively early in life. Changes on the femur side of the joint, including cam lesions, are thought to develop during adolescence, especially in active teens.

Diagnosis often starts with the symptoms a person describes. Groin pain, pain with sitting, and a pinching sensation during activity can all point toward hip impingement. A physical exam also is important, since many people have reduced motion when the knee is brought up toward the chest. X-rays help evaluate the shape of the hip. In some cases, an MRI is used to examine the cushioning cartilage, such as the labrum, more closely, especially if surgery is being considered.

The first line of treatment often is physical therapy to strengthen the core, lower back and muscles around the hip. Activity changes and anti-inflammatory medications also may help. It's important that therapy specifically targets hip impingement, since some exercises may worsen symptoms.

If symptoms continue and begin to affect quality of life, surgery may be considered. The most common procedure is hip arthroscopy, which uses small instruments and a camera to repair the labrum and reshape areas of bone. Recovery takes time, with crutches often needed for four to six weeks, followed by a gradual return to activity. Most people improve within three to four months, although returning to higher-level sports may take closer to six months.

If left untreated, outcomes for hip impingement depend on the severity of the condition. In some people, it may raise the risk of arthritis later in life. In others, symptoms may stay mild or manageable. Not every person with hip impingement will need surgery, and treatment decisions should be based on symptoms and how much the condition affects daily life.

Hip impingement can be an overlooked cause of ongoing hip pain in young adults, especially in people who are active. It's often manageable with the right treatment and activity changes. If hip pain keeps coming back or begins to interfere with daily life, it's worth getting checked rather than assuming it's just a strain.

– Mason Uvodich, M.D., Orthopedics & Orthopedic Surgery, Mayo Clinic Health System, La Crosse and Onalaska, Wisconsin

Dreamstime / TNS

Hip impingement, also called femoroacetabular impingement, is a condition that often affects young, active adults. It occurs when the shape of the hip joint causes the ball and socket to pinch during movement. Over time, that can lead to pain, stiffness and wear in the joint.

THE CONVERSATION

Beyond car seats and childproof pill bottles

A child psychologist explains how to empower kids to make safer choices

By DAVID C. SCHWEBEL
University of Iowa (The Conversation)

Anchiy / Getty Images

Unintentional injuries kill more than 7,000 children ages 1-19 in the U.S. each year – close to 20 deaths per day. Injuries are the leading cause of child death, and these injuries are often preventable.

Prevention takes many forms. Government policy helps tremendously. As an example, regulations requiring carbon monoxide detectors allowed people to prevent or escape dangerous carbon monoxide buildup in their homes. Engineering innovations help also; car seats, child-resistant medication lids and soft playground surfaces each prevent countless injuries and deaths.

A third pillar to child injury prevention is behavioral: To a surprisingly large degree, the adults in children's lives can change the math on injury risks.

As a child psychologist who has studied child injury prevention for three decades and authored the book "Raising Kids Who Choose Safety," I study ways to change human behavior and reduce the burden of child injury.

Since adults are better able to recognize injury risks than children, they are often in a position to intervene before injuries occur. And children can also promote their own safety when they follow safety rules and, especially as they get older, make safe decisions.

Of course, adults can't always predict or prepare their child for every situation. People inevitably encounter unexpectedly broken playground equipment, dangerous intersections or icy walkways. But here are some research-backed approaches that adults can adopt to work toward creating a family culture of safety – thereby guiding children to make safer choices as they grow.

Knowledge is power

Don't underestimate the power of direct instruction. Children can learn simple safety rules by about age 2: "Don't go past the sidewalk" or "Don't pet the dog when it is sleeping."

As children grow older, parents can teach more complex skills – handling fire while lighting holiday candles, for example, or managing neighborhood traffic when cycling to school.

Teaching safety works best when people encounter potential hazards during their daily activities – pedestrian safety while walking through a supermarket parking lot or knife safety while preparing lunch. It's easy to gloss over these teaching moments for activities that are so routine to adults, but research shows that talking through them with children in real time helps prevent injuries.

Active prevention

One tried and true safety tactic, especially for young children, is placing safeguards that prevent access to dangerous items or situations – for example, installing cabinet locks, stair gates and outlet covers.

Another key action is supervision. Adults supervising children must balance three elements, depending on the circumstances: how intensely they watch, how close they are to the child, and how continuous their attention is. Near water, proximity makes it easier to physically intervene if needed. On playgrounds, verbal instead of physical warnings are often sufficient, so continuity is more critical.

A fourth element of supervision arises in certain situations, such as backyard swimming: competence. Detecting when children are drowning can be difficult because they may sink underwater without visibly struggling. If a child is in distress in the water, knowing how to rescue them and provide CPR can be lifesaving.

Do as I do

Children learn by watching people they trust. That means parents' and caregivers' actions concerning safety are especially important.

Even though children notoriously love to test the limits of parental rules, studies suggest that parents who restrain from distracted driving are more likely to have children who do the same, as are parents who wear bike helmets.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, children take notice when their parents do not always practice the safety lessons they preach. In one study, children ages 7-12 were aware that their parents' own use of safety items like seat belts, bicycle helmets and sunscreen were significantly less common than the parents' expectations for the child to use them.

Most children drew one of two mistaken conclusions from this observation – that taking safety measures was "for kids only" and less important for adults, or that adults possess some unique ability that overcomes the need for safety equipment.

Encouraging good choices

Frequent doses of guidance, praise and redirection can help good safety decisions take root as habits. Acknowledging a wise decision – grabbing a helmet on the way out for a bike ride, with a "Good thinking!" or a quick high-five, reinforces that decision.

Redirecting a bad idea – jumping off a balcony into a pile of leaves below – into a safer but still enjoyable activity encourages better future decisions.

The goal is not punishment or lectures; instead, small morsels of praise and redirection prime children to recognize risk on their own as they develop cognitive and physical capacity.

David C. Schwebel is a professor of psychological and brain sciences at the University of Iowa. The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts. This article is republished under a Creative Commons license. Read the original article at https://theconversation.com.

The lowdown on **melatonin**

Melatonin can be a safe and effective sleep aid for all ages – but product inconsistencies and improper dosing lead to real harms

By SALLY IBRAHIM
Case Western Reserve University
(The Conversation)

Rudzhan Nagiev / Getty Images

Melatonin – a go-to sleep aid for kids and adults alike in many households in America – continues to create media buzz, with conflicting messages that leave people uncertain about its safety.

Some headlines point to melatonin's supposed immunity boosting power, while others point to unestablished links between melatonin and heart failure.

I'm a pediatrician and sleep medicine doctor specializing in children, adolescents and adults.

In my experience, many families go through difficulties with sleep for several months and even years before they seek out specialty care, and often they come across information online that isn't tailored to the right age group or sleep condition. In addition, the Food and Drug Administration hasn't approved any insomnia medications for children, so pediatricians don't have many options.

Melatonin is the most widely studied sleep aid in children. Still, I find that many parents feel uncertain about using melatonin, and some even experience guilt if they do, despite some clear benefits with appropriate use.

Adequate, regular and healthy sleep is essential for functioning our best throughout the day, and people deserve to get sleep information that is supported by evidence.

Melatonin's role in shaping circadian rhythms

Melatonin is released during evening hours by a tiny, pine cone-shaped endocrine gland deep in the brain called the pineal gland.

Melatonin levels peak in the middle of the night and plummet by morning. Once the melatonin signal starts to come on, it rises and then falls during the night. This process is "circadian" in that it happens daily.

Light is the strongest inhibitor of melatonin production. Darkness removes that inhibition and allows the pineal gland to release melatonin. This is why sleep specialists often advise against exposure to bright light and encourage natural light exposure during the day – particularly in the morning – to solidify natural sleep patterns based on circadian rhythms.

Melatonin and sleep regulation

Unlike other over-the-counter sleep aids, melatonin affects two pathways that encourage sleep. One pathway results in the "hypnotic" effect, which increases sleepiness and helps us fall asleep, like most other sleep aids. The other pathway, which is unique to melatonin, results in the "chronotropic" effect, which helps support and regulate sleep-wake timing and circadian rhythms.

Having insomnia, which includes difficulties falling asleep, staying asleep or waking too early, can lead to daytime dysfunction. When used at night, melatonin can reduce the time it takes to fall asleep and may also shift the circadian clock to an earlier time.

A circadian rhythm disorder refers to a problem with the timing of sleep in relation to our environment.

The most common circadian rhythm disorder in some teenagers and young adults is the delayed type. This relates to having a later internal clock compared with actual clock time. In other words, people are not tired enough to go to bed until later – even after midnight. This affects the time of sleep onset, making it hard to fall asleep and hard to wake up, and ultimately shortens sleep duration.

Melatonin can be helpful in these cases because it signals the delayed brain clock that it's time for sleep earlier than the person would naturally feel tired.

Importantly, taking synthetically produced melatonin does not affect or interfere with the body's own production of melatonin.

The wide variety of melatonin options

Melatonin products can be made in a regular immediate-release formulation, which is found in most liquids and chewables. These provide a fast peak effect – usually within 10 to 30 minutes of taking it – for helping with falling sleep.

It can also be made in an extended-release formulation. These products have a gradual onset, sometimes even peaking midsleep and making it easier to stay asleep.

Some brands provide both immediate and extended-release benefits for falling asleep and staying asleep.

Many children with insomnia before bedtime who use melatonin will be able to fall asleep faster and increase total sleep time by about a half-hour; some do not respond.

For this and other reasons, it's important to consult with a healthcare provider before taking melatonin or giving it to a child.

Potential downsides of melatonin

Melatonin comes with some potential downsides, the most obvious of which is that because it is considered a dietary supplement in the U.S., it is not regulated by the FDA as a prescription medication.

In other parts of the world, such as the European Union, melatonin is available only by prescription, with appropriate dosing by a licensed clinician.

Because melatonin is labeled only as a supplement in the U.S., many parents are giving it to their children without the guidance of a healthcare professional and without trying nonpharmaceutical therapies for insomnia first. And many people use melatonin for undiagnosed sleep conditions that may not warrant its use. It is important to seek medical attention before using any sleep aid, including melatonin.

Another major variable is brand quality. One brand might deliver spot-on doses backed by rigorous testing for quality, while another might have wildly different concentrations than the label claims.

For instance, a 2023 study showed that some brands labeled a chewable gummy product as melatonin even though it contained no melatonin. Even more disturbing, some brands whose products were labeled as melatonin in the study actually had cannabidiol, or CBD, in them instead.

The same study found that among 30 commercial melatonin products, melatonin content ranged from −83 percent to +478 percent of the labeled content. And even within a single lot of a given brand, melatonin content varied by as much as 465 percent.

High doses of melatonin in children have not been tested for safety. While reported overdoses are generally associated with mild symptoms, some children have been hospitalized.

Because melatonin is not regulated as a drug in the U.S., it is a good idea to check consumer sites to find reliable brands and to look for USP verification, a third-party testing program performed by an independent nonprofit organization.

It is imperative that parents keep melatonin out of the reach of children, particularly gummies, which may appear tasty to a child. There have been numerous reports of kids mistaking supplements in the form of gummies – melatonin or otherwise – for candy, leading to overuse and overdoses.

Melatonin use for insomnia in children and adolescents

When used correctly – meaning the right brand, right dose, right reason and with guidance from a healthcare professional – melatonin can be used safely to help support treatment of insomnia.

Research strongly points to the safety of melatonin as a sleep aid for use in children, along with other treatments for disorders of insomnia and circadian rhythm disorder.

In particular, there is a solid base of studies about the safety and effectiveness of melatonin use in children with neurodevelopmental disorders, such as autism spectrum disorder and attention-deficity/hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD. Many clinicians who care for children with autism and ADHD recommend the use of melatonin after trying other behavioral strategies for insomnia.

The most trustworthy evidence for the use of melatonin in children and teens comes from rigorous scientific studies called randomized controlled trials. In one trial of 125 children and teens – the majority of whom had autism – melatonin use increased total sleep at night by nearly 60 minutes.

Another comparative study of 275 children demonstrated that those who received melatonin slept 22 minutes longer, on average, compared with those in the placebo group.

While long-term studies are still limited, one study of children with autism who took nightly prolonged-release melatonin for two years found no significant changes in body mass index or puberty timing.

When using melatonin, the timing and dosage is critical for efficacy and safety. Doctors recommend taking melatonin 30 minutes before bedtime for insomnia.

The International Pediatric Sleep Association recommends the following dosages, according to age:

- Toddler (ages 2–3): Up to 1 milligram (mg); not recommended for infants under 2
- Preschool (ages 4–5): Up to 2 mg
- School-age (ages 6–10): Up to 3 mg
- Older school-age and adolescents (ages 11+): Up to 5 mg

Sally Ibrahim is an associate professor of pediatrics at Case Western Reserve University. The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts. This article is republished under a Creative Commons license. Read the original article at https://theconversation.com.

FOOD

Skip the chicken and try these Buffalo chickpea wraps

By GRETCHEN MCKAY
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (TNS)

If you love the fiery kick of Buffalo sauce, chances are you've reached for it countless times over the years to sauce up wings served at a tailgate, or to add some oomph to one of Pittsburgh's favorite party appetizers – Buffalo chicken dip.

The classic and irresistible pairing of fat and acid is nothing short of genius; the butter that makes the sauce taste so rich and creamy is perfectly tempered by the vinegar that adds a signature tang to the hot sauce. Add a bit of funk with some earthy crumbles of blue cheese and it's a dish made in a chilehead's heaven. Only problem is, it's not exactly healthful.

This recipe from Joe Woodhouse's latest cookbook, "Weeknight Vegetarian: Easy Vegetable Recipes for Lunch & Dinner" (Kyle Books, $30), is a better-for-you vegetarian spin on the dish. It's made with chickpeas instead of chopped chicken, cream cheese and shredded cheddar.

A rich source of protein, chickpeas (legumes) are also cholesterol-free and full of soluble fiber. They're also a heck of a lot cheaper than chicken: a 15-ounce can often costs less than $1 and serves two people.

Included in the "Assembly Jobs (mostly)" section of Woodhouse's book, this recipe requires minimal cooking to maximum effect. If you know your way around a frying pan and can chop a stalk of celery, you're golden.

I used 10-inch flour tortillas and Texas Pete hot sauce, but any brand of hot sauce will work. If you're not sure of your heat tolerance, add slowly and taste as you go. While a traditional Buffalo chicken dish doesn't include cilantro, I added a couple of tablespoons for an extra pop of color and flavor.

Trying to stay gluten-free? The filling could also be used to add a little plant-based protein to a tossed salad.

Buffalo Chickpea Wraps
Makes 4 wraps

If using canned chickpeas, be sure to rinse and drain them to remove excess starch before adding to the hot sauce.

FOR SAUCE:
- 1/3 cup tahini
- Finely grated zest and juice of 1 lemon
- Salt, to taste
- 2 1/2 ounces cold water

FOR WRAPS:
- 2 15-ounce cans chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 4 tablespoons hot sauce, such as Texas Peter or Frank's Red Hot, plus more for garnish
- 1 clove garlic, finely minced
- 1 celery stick, finely chopped
- 1 small red onion or 2 green onions, finely sliced or chopped
- 2 tablespoons chopped cilantro
- 4 10-inch flour tortillas
- 1 cup (4 ounces) blue cheese, crumbled
- 2/3 cup (3 1/2 ounces) cherry tomatoes, quartered
- Baby gem or romaine lettuce, shredded
- Neutral oil, for cooking

Prepare sauce: Whisk tahini with lemon zest and juice and a good pinch of salt. Add enough of the measured water to loosen the mixture and form a sauce; fluid but not runny is the key.

Toss drained chickpeas in a mixing bowl with hot sauce and garlic, gently crushing a few chickpeas to help the mixture come together. Stir in celery, onion and cilantro. Taste and adjust seasoning.

Gently warm flatbreads in a dry frying pan to make them soft and malleable. You also can warm them by laying them on a toaster; just be careful they don't catch fire.

Spread tahini sauce on flatbreads. Pile the chickpea mixture in the center and add cheese, tomatoes and lettuce.

With the wrap in front of you, fold up the edge closest to you. Turn and fold the next section into the middle and continue until you have a neat pentagon.

Brush a tiny bit of oil over a frying pan and toast the wraps on each side, starting with the seam side, until golden and crisp (it will help seal the wrap). Go slowly, as you want the cheese to melt and the filling to be warmed through.

Enjoy with extra hot sauce if you like.

– Adapted from "Weeknight Vegetarian" by Joe Woodhouse

Sofi's Ginger Salmon with Dill Cucumber Salad

By LINDA GASSENHEIMER
Tribune News Service (TNS)

My friend Norma insisted I try this dinner, telling me it was the best salmon she had ever tasted. It was a recipe she'd received from her friend Sofi. After making it myself, I understood exactly what she meant.

I've adapted it here for a quick and easy salmon dinner that doesn't sacrifice flavor. The secret lies in a simple yet vibrant glaze of fresh ginger and brown sugar that beautifully coats the fish. I recommend using wild salmon, which is in season now and brings a fresh, rich taste that makes this dish truly shine.

HELPFUL HINTS:
For quicker preparation, look for fresh grated ginger in jars at the market.

Sophi's Ginger Salmon
Yield 2 servings
- 2, 6-ounce wild caught salmon fillets
- Pinch salt
- Pinch freshly ground black pepper
- 1/4 cup freshly grated ginger
- 1/4 cup light brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 whole wheat 6-to-7-inch pita breads

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or foil. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Season salmon with salt and pepper and place on baking sheet. In a small bowl mix ginger, brown sugar and oil together to form a paste. Spread paste over salmon. Place baking sheet in the oven and bake 15 to 18 minutes. A meat thermometer should read 125 degrees. Place one fillet on a dinner plate. Serve pita bread on the side.

Dill Cucumber Salad
Yield 2 servings
- 2 cups sliced cucumbers, washed with skin on
- 1/2 cup thinly sliced red onion
- 1 cup washed and sliced radishes
- 4 tablespoons reduced fat vinaigrette dressing
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill

Add cucumbers, onion, and radishes to a medium size mixing bowl. Add the vinaigrette dressing and toss well. Divide in half and place each half on the plates with the salmon. Sprinkle chopped dill over the salad.

Linda Gassenheimer is the author of over 30 cookbooks, including her newest, "The 12-Week Diabetes Cookbook." Listen to Linda on www.WDNA.org and all major podcast sites. Email her at Linda@DinnerInMinutes.com.

ENTERTAINMENT

Lawrence K. Ho / Los Angeles Times / TNS

Characters in plays by Young Jean Lee, such as "Straight White Men," are often "trying on masks to see what might prove effective in a given situation."

American playwrights are embracing the nation's complexity

Will audiences answer the call?

By CHARLES MCNULTY
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

The American democratic experiment stands on shaky ground. Not since the Civil War have these proverbially United States been so disunited. As the nation throws itself a grand old 250th birthday bash in Washington, the mood in much of the country is more funereal than festive.

All-out partisan warfare has sown chaos. Republican legislators, taking their lead from a president who sees half the nation as his personal enemy, have put their own party's interests over the republic's. Staying in office has become the only thing that matters. The values imparted to me throughout my public school education – equal opportunity, impartial justice, respect for expertise, basic honesty – have been abandoned by a new breed of politician that has turned governance itself into a blood sport.

Where can one turn for reassurance that America's best years are still ahead? Would you believe me if I said the theater? I'm not toeing the line for my field. I'm merely calling attention to a development that's been gaining strength since I first reported on it in 2015. A cohort of playwrights, breathtakingly diverse demographically as well as aesthetically, has been rejuvenating American theater.

These writers aren't on a sociological mission. They're not trafficking in grievance or appealing to a particular political base. They let their plays do the talking. And they've been trying to have a conversation that isn't hijacked by the most doctrinaire voices in the room.

From an institutional perspective, the American theater is in bad shape. The triple whammy of the COVID-19 closures, inflation and technological disruption has left everyone hurting. The Mark Taper Forum had to suspend programming for more than a year, smaller companies still in operation are producing fewer shows, and producers everywhere are gravitating toward the bankably familiar.

But despite this difficult terrain, it has been a boom time for American playwriting. For more than a decade, I've been teaching a course at the California Institute of the Arts called American Drama Now, and each year the selection of plays has become harder to whittle down. I designed the seminar partly around theater offerings in Los Angeles to connect students to recent developments in the field and to consolidate awareness that something special is happening in the American theater.

The current generation of playwrights has revealed itself to be remarkably resilient and independent. It has had no other choice. By the time many of these rising talents were accruing debt in graduate writing programs, the dream of a sustainable career in the nonprofit theater had already gasped its last breath.

When Wendy Wasserstein, Tony Kushner,Craig Lucas and Jon Robin Baitz emerged in the late 1970s and '80s, it was still imaginable that a chosen few playwrights could make a living via the regional theater circuit, that constellation of companies founded as an alternative to the Broadway model.

That prospect was growing dimmer a few years later when playwrights such as Suzan-Lori Parks and Lynn Nottage came into prominence. But hope was still alive in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Regional theaters such as Seattle Rep, the Guthrie, the Goodman and Baltimore Center Stage remained committed to their missions while New York nonprofit companies continued to hold the line off-Broadway.

When did the picture change? In 2009, "Outrageous Fortune: The Life and Times of the New American Play" was published by the Theatre Development Fund, and one of the key findings in this study written by Todd London with Ben Pesner and Zannie Giraud Voss is that "there is no way to view playwriting as anything but a profession without an economic base." A chasm had opened between the network of increasingly corporate-minded nonprofit theaters and the artists this system was built to serve.

The situation has grown bleaker in the last decade and a half as commercial pressures have ramped up and media consolidation and digital shortsightedness have obliterated arts coverage. Yet there's been an unexpected upside. Theater artists who have come of age in this period have been released from the burden of having to conform to notions of regional theater respectability.

Instead of worrying about the timid taste of subscription audiences, these dramatists have been writing for themselves and their communities, dreaming up plays that don't have to fit into institutional slots or stay within the staid bounds of traditional proscenium house decorum. The irony is that in not trying to pass muster with more conservative theatergoers (and their fastidious institutional guardians), playwrights have been winning over not just critics but also formerly squeamish artistic directors and perennially nervous Broadway producers.

The playwrights who appear regularly on the syllabus in American Drama Now – Young Jean Lee, Tarell Alvin McCraney, Annie Baker, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, Samuel D. Hunter, Martyna Majok, Jeremy O. Harris, Will Arbery, Jackie Sibblies Drury, Quiara Alegría Hudes, Ayad Akhtar, among them – are of different ages, sensibilities and backgrounds. What they share is an appreciation of the complexities and contradictions in being an American.

The politics of identity for them is a lived experience. And as dramatists, they're uniquely positioned to appreciate the conflicted loyalties and communal tensions of American life in dramatic rather than dogmatic terms. Whatever agendas they may personally espouse, these writers are too alert to the messiness of history and human nature to be rigidly ideological in their work.

The ongoing war between woke and anti-woke factions is a fatuous melodrama best left to the satirists. The goal of playwrights grappling seriously with what it means to be an American today isn't to score social media points but to shed light on the fractured reality of our collective experience.

Identity is not a fixed fact but a raucous collision of parts. No single category can contain the Whitmanesque multitudes jockeying for position inside us. Race, religion, ethnicity, gender, age, sexuality, class, disability and geography don't line up in perfect political harmony, and each social marker tells only a fraction of the whole story. (Money, the great unequalizer, may be the most taboo subject of all.) "We are not only but also," the sociologist and cultural historian Todd Gitlin wrote in his 1995 book "The Twilight of Common Dreams: Why America Is Wracked by Culture Wars." We also overlap and often even clash with ourselves.

Discussion around identity can be dangerous. How can anyone be expected to navigate the minefield? Tribalists and traditionalists have controlled the terms of the battle, one by simplifying, the other by denying, the way privilege has shaped our compound selves.

Playwrights know better. They understand the way oppression, which falls disproportionately on the marginalized, has warped all of us. History, whether acknowledged or not, is etched in our souls.

It is a long-held tenet of the theater that the most interesting characters, like the most interesting people, are defined by their schisms and paradoxes. (How else could Hamlet have maintained his centuries-long hold?) Dramatists are more cognizant than ever of the sociopolitical import of these contradictions and they've been chronicling the way this historically freighted baggage emerges in the drama of everyday life.

All the world is indeed a stage and all its inhabitants merely stock players, as Jaques lays out in "As You Like It." Hegel described Shakespeare's characters as "free artists of their own selves." The truth where we and our contemporary stage surrogates are concerned is somewhat more constrained. Culture and representation largely determine the range of our performance possibilities.

Jacobs-Jenkins has recognized perhaps more acutely than any of his peers the way dramatic forms have locked us into set scripts about our lives. He tackles genres – adapting a Dion Boucicault melodrama in "An Octoroon," reexamining the canon of great American family dramas in "Appropriate" – to uncover the stories that have been suppressed in the dominant white middle-class narratives that would prefer not to think of themselves as political.

Lee's standout identity plays – "Straight White Men," "The Shipment" and "Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven" – reject the illusion of stable, coherent characters propagated by psychological realism. The figures in her uncategorizable works are in experimental flux, trying on masks to see what might prove effective in a given situation. Even "Straight White Men," which uses the old home-for-the-holidays genre as a springboard, can't help spinning away from the drama's droll hyper-naturalism toward something resembling performance art. (Not even straight, white men want to be confined to a box, even a relatively plush one.)

In "Fairview," Jackie Sibblies Drury theatricalizes the experience of the white gaze, ultimately reversing the comfortable position white theater audiences have traditionally held. Bess Wohl's "Liberation," this year's most decorated play, reanimates the history of the 1970s feminist movement by questioning what it could be leaving out of the picture. "The Balusters," by David Lindsey-Abaire, brings the current culture wars to the stage with unique sensitivity through the squabbles of a neighborhood association torn between protecting its town's heritage status and coming to terms with the more pluralistic demands of the 21st century.

"Fairview," "Liberation," and "The Balusters" are extremely funny plays that also happen to be deadly serious. If philosophy begins in wonder, trenchant social drama seems to start in laughter.

What do theatergoers want? They don't just want to look; they also want to be seen. Isn't that what any of us wants when gazing into the mirror held up to nature, as Hamlet describes the theater? To be granted a more expansive view of ourselves and others?

E pluribus unum, the motto of the United States, is so fundamental that it's printed on our currency. There's perhaps no place where the truth of this phrase – out of many, one – is more regularly realized than at the theater, where strangers transform over the course of a show into that mysterious organism we call an audience.

Gitlin ends "The Twilight of Common Dreams" with a plea: "For too long, Americans have busied themselves digging trenches to fortify their cultural borders, lining their trenches with insulation. Enough bunkers! Enough of the perfection of differences! We ought to be building bridges."

A coalition mindset doesn't mean denying history or pretending that America has been a level playing field. It's been anything but in this "melting pot where nothing melted," to quote the rabbi whose eulogy sets Kushner's "Angels in America" in motion. But history happens to all of us, not just a select few. And to be an American is to be embroiled in the great democratic experiment that has been defined by division from the beginning. Empathy, the nuclear fusion of playwriting, is expanded when we're allowed to take in more of our patchwork selves. Today's dramatists have been extending a generous invitation to their compatriots: We'll show you our complexity, if you'll show us yours.

MOVIE REVIEW

Illumination & Universal Pictures / TNS

A scene from "Minions & Monsters," directed by Pierre Coffin.

'Minions & Monsters' is Coffin's love letter to Old Hollywood

By KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service (TNS)

James, left, and Henry in a scene from "Minions & Monsters," directed by Pierre Coffin.

Pierre Coffin would like a little respect – and maybe an Oscar. So would James, the Minion hero of Coffin's new movie, "Minions & Monsters," and they're both going to go about it in the same way, by making a movie about Hollywood. Flattery will get you everywhere, especially in this town.

Coffin is the French madman behind the Minions, those little yellow guys in overalls that are now ubiquitous. He's the voice actor, fluent in Minionese (a language he invented, a blend of Spanish, French, Italian, gibberish and various other sounds), and the director of the first four movies in the "Despicable Me" franchise (he was nominated for an Oscar for "Despicable Me 2"). While he has continued to lend his vocal skills, he has returned as director with a new Minions vehicle that's a bit more high-minded than the usual fare, both a love letter to Old Hollywood and a lightly spiky critique.

The Academy loves to reward films about the noble quest of making art, especially movies, because who wouldn't want to see themselves reflected onscreen? Coffin may be banking on that narcissism, while simultaneously giving the American film industry a light, good-humored flambé. But he's also legitimizing his Minions, placing them, Forrest Gump-style, in the lineage of cinema history. What is a Minion if not a silent movie star like Harold Lloyd or Buster Keaton gone through a few iterations? (Though the "Jackass" boys would like a word on that front.)

By placing the Minions in early films like "L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat," and the Georges Méliès sci-fi flick "A Trip to the Moon," Coffin suggests that the earliest DNA of the Minions is in these experiments of sensation and spectacle. They're not just silly little creatures, they're cinema, he argues (with co-writer Brian Lynch).

Coffin literally places his star Minions, Henry and James, in a movie museum next to George Lucas, where Allison Janney voices a tour guide who provides the framing device for this historical yarn. As she tells a group of unruly kids, in the old days, Minion tribes roamed the planet searching for evil masters to serve – no wonder they ended up in Hollywood, right?

After stints with a cyclops, wizard, mummy, king, samurai, etc., this crew of Minions barrels into the Hollywood of the 1920s on a runaway train, where they become movie stars, taken under the wing of a movie director named Max (Christoph Waltz), who works for oversized super producers the Bright Brothers (Jeff Bridges). It's a heady, wild, decadent and debauched time (see also, Damien Chazelle's "Babylon"), until the advent of sound. Much like Lina Lamont in "Singin' in the Rain," the Minions can't make the leap, and end up out on the street.

Henry, James and Ed pursue their dream of making James' monster movie, while the rest of the gang team up with Dort (Jesse Eisenberg), a friendly alien robot who'd like to take over the planet. Big dreamer James is like any aspiring young filmmaker – blindly driven to the point of ignoring every red flag that comes his way. He and his pals want to conjure up a kaiju from their old wizard's spell book for the movie, but end up manifesting scheming monster Goomi (Trey Parker), who becomes a classic smarmy producer talking out of both sides of his mouth. The monster pals Goomi summons are liable to destroy everything, including a giant, all-consuming orange blob covered in eyeballs named Irene (Eye-rene?).

Choose your own metaphorical adventure with the lovely Irene, a monster whose only motivation is to mindlessly devour. Does she represent corporate mergers and monopolies that swallow up every creator and craftsperson in her wake? Or is does she represent the kind of (dumb) artificial intelligence that consumes a whole town and industry, leaving us with only mass surveillance and nothing of use? Why not both?

'Minions & Monsters'

★★★

MPA rating: PG (for violence/action, language and rude/macabre humor)

Running time: 1:30

How to watch: In theaters

Either way, "Minions & Monsters" is a lightly barbed cautionary tale about the collective (hordes of brave little Minions) coming together to protect a certain way of life, and a certain way of making movies. It might be represented by a world that's now a hundred or so years old, but it's an era that we romanticize nevertheless.

With the joyous James his avatar, "Minions & Monsters" is Coffin's Hollywood mash note, his cinephile cri de coeur, stuffed with historical in-jokes to please the movie nerds, and lots of other silly stuff to please the kids (and hopefully this movie can be a gateway drug to "Singin' in the Rain"). For this film lover, it's probably the first actual capital G Good "Minions" movie, but, there's a first time for everything. Always expect the unexpected, especially when it comes to the Minions.

SERIES REVIEW

'Elle' review: Prime Video's *'Legally Blonde'* prequel series is a charmer

By MOIRA MACDONALD
The Seattle Times (TNS)

Jessica Brooks / Prime Video / TNS

Lexi Minetree stars as the titular character in "Elle," a prequel series to "Legally Blonde."

If you happened to be wondering about Elle Woods' origin story – I wasn't, but surely somebody was – help is at hand in the form of "Elle," a prequel turning up exactly 25 years after "Legally Blonde" became a frothy summer hit for Reese Witherspoon. Having viewed all eight episodes of "Elle," which begins streaming Wednesday on Prime Video, I can tell you that it's pretty much exactly what you would expect: "Elle" is a cute, funny fish-out-of-water comedy series that unfolds rather slowly (it might have worked much better as a two-hour movie), and Lexi Minetree in the title role is uncannily good at channeling young Witherspoon's performance in the 2001 movie, with that sweet breathiness and wide-eyed comic timing down pat. (What, like it's hard? Sorry, couldn't resist.) It's an enjoyable watch, full of winking references to the original ("Have you ever considered being a lawyer one day?" somebody asks Elle, admiringly) and to other classic rom-coms, most notably "Bridget Jones's Diary" and "Clueless."

But here's what's potentially of most interest to those of us contemplating "Elle" from our perch here in the Pacific Northwest: In the first episode, Elle and her parents (June Diane Raphael, Tom Everett Scott) move from Los Angeles to Seattle, which means that perpetually pink-clad Elle must find her way in a mid-'90s Seattle public high school where nobody is blond and everyone's in grunge flannels. (Seriously, everybody. Even the cheerleaders wear chopped-off plaid flannel shirts with their little skirts, which is an unexpectedly cute look. This is, from what I hear from actual mid-'90s Seattle public high school alumni, not really how things rolled back then, but never mind.) Elle's L.A. friends are horrified by the move ("It sounds … north," says one), but the ever-positive Elle is determined to make things work, even bedazzling a Nirvana T-shirt in a failed attempt to fit in.

The actual Seattle content, unfortunately, is mostly nonexistent: Except for a few establishing shots, "Elle" wasn't actually filmed here. Like so many productions, it was shot in my other hometown of Vancouver, British Columbia, and sharp-eyed viewers will note the Granville Island Public Market standing in for Pike Place, complete with fish throwers. Elle's Seattle high school, "Rainier West," is actually Point Grey Secondary School in Vancouver – which just happens to be a block from the house I grew up in, which means that if you watched "Elle" with me, you would have been very annoyed by my constant and extremely knowledgeable interjections of "There is ALREADY a stop sign at that corner" and other important information. (Seth Rogen is an alumnus of Point Grey, and his production company is Point Grey Pictures. The GIPM does not actually have fish throwers. OK, I'll stop now.)

But even the faux-Seattleness of "Elle" is decidedly odd. Teens throw outdoor parties in November; there's a general agreement that nobody wears suede; and, in a development that caused me to pause my screener and ask dramatically, of nobody, "WHAT???," it's casually revealed that – not a spoiler! Nobody would notice this but us! – Elle and her family live in Medina. Which, I need not tell you, is not Seattle. Late in the series, somebody unveils a sign for a retail establishment located in "Medina, Seattle," and yes, I'm harping on this a bit, and maybe in 1995 Medina everybody was wearing flannel all the time and this show is actually a documentary, but it was quite a distraction. Between Vancouver and Medina, we're pretty far from actual Seattle, but I appreciated the references to Amazon (known back then as "that dinky little online bookstore"), "Sleepless in Seattle" (which Elle watches, of course, on VHS) and the late Mercer Arena.

'Elle'

Rating: TV-14

How to watch: On Pime Video

But the nonetheless likable "Elle" – already renewed for a second season – does have a few things to say about Seattle, in its binary way. Seattle is set up as the backwards-day version of Los Angeles, until Elle figures out that Seattle teens are every bit as conformist as L.A. ones, but just don't like to admit it. "They're really afraid of being like everyone else," a sympathetic adult tells Elle, who adds in soft dismay, "except when it comes to plaid." And, despite some romantic complications and mild rebellion (involving some "Breakfast Club" cosplay) and pink-tinged frustrations, young Elle finds herself falling in love with Seattle – and beginning to find her voice. So, apparently we in Seattle can take some credit for Elle Woods' brilliant career. No objections here.

West Chester native Bam Margera poses for a portrait at his home in West Chester, Pa., on June 4.
Photos by Jose F. Moreno / The Philadelphia Inquirer / TNS

Bam Margera is sober, skating and is *(sort of)* back in the final *'Jackass'*

By JASON NARK
The Philadelphia Inquirer (TNS)

West Chester native Bam Margera is filmed by a documentary crew as he rests during a boxing workout at his home in West Chester, Pa., on Friday.

PHILADELPHIA — A former bouncer with hands like 5-pound hams was peppering Bam Margera with rib punches in a small gym at his Chester County castle.

Every few minutes, Margera waved his hands in surrender. He started looking for a place to sit down. Sweat poured down his face, and he struggled to catch his breath

"I need a second," he said.

Margera had strung together years of bad days recently, but, despite the pain, this wasn't one of them. Today, he's sober, in love, skateboarding, spending some time with his family and son, Phoenix Wolf, and, on this early June afternoon, working out too.

Fans of the "Jackass" series will get to see him this weekend when "Jackass: Best and Last," the fifth and final film in the series, is released.

"I think this is the grand finale of it all," he said.

While Margera didn't film new stunts or pranks for the latest film and had no interest in attending any premieres (his parents attended) or promotional events, he signed a deal allowing unseen archival footage and outtakes from early "Jackass" days to be used in the film.

Margera had a public falling out with the Jackass crew over sobriety demands they placed on him before the release of 2022's "Jackass Forever." (He still blames Johnny Knoxville's "sharp tacks" stunt in a "Viva La Bam" episode for damaging his feet and hurting his skateboarding career.)

"I'm not ready to reunite with anybody," he said recently.

Paramount Pictures alleged Margera broke a "wellness agreement" that required him to undergo regular drug and alcohol tests and take prescribed medication to be in the 2022 film. When the film was released, Margera had a brief cameo, and The Inquirer noted that it suffered without Margera's trademark heartagram symbol and Philly hoagiemouth accent.

Some stars of the show and films, including Stephen "Steve-O" Glover and Brandon Novak, a longtime friend of Margera's, have gotten sober. While Margera was seemingly blowing up friendships at his worst, Novak, a former pro skater, said he never took it personally.

"I always have and will still love him, wherever he is in his journey," he told The Inquirer in June.

Three years ago, Margera seemed hellbent on burning his own bridges to a better life. He was in California, a long way from his home and family in Chester County. He was even further from good publicity, from his passion – skateboarding – or any semblance of a normal life. In his own words, he became a professional "piece of s---."

Margera was mired in a custody battle with his ex-wife, Nikki Boyd, along with a slew of other legal issues and lawsuits in Pennsylvania and beyond, plus the subsequent attorney fees. He was in and out of rehabilitation centers for drugs and alcohol, too, and was also dealing with medical and mental health issues.

When The Inquirer spoke to Steve-O about Margera in 2023, he said he was ready to help.

"I just can't do it for him," Steve-O said at the time. "I tried everything I could to encourage him to want to get better, and none of it worked, so here we are. He has to want to get better."

Margera was placed on a 5150 psychiatric hold when he was found acting erratically outside Trejo's Tacos in Los Angeles in June of 2023. When he was released, he checked into the Sunset Marquis hotel with more drugs than he'd ever had. Looking back, Margera said he wasn't suicidal, but he didn't really expect to wake up.

Still, he said a little prayer that night.

If he survived, Margera expected God to deliver him the "hottest eye candy with a tan pit bull" to save him. When he woke up, surprised to be alive, Margera went out by the pool, ordered a bloody mary, and met Daani Marie, a model and stretch coach he later married.

Margera and Daani Marie, who now spend most of their time in Florida, hit it off immediately.

"I really like you," she said, "do you want to walk my dog with me?

"What kind of dog do you have?" Bam asked.

"A tan pit bull."

He looked up at the sun and smiled.

While he didn't get sober immediately, Margera credits that night, that chance meeting with Daani Marie the next morning, for at least putting him on the path. The two were married in New Mexico a year later.

"Enough was enough," Margera said. "I knew if I continued this lifestyle, I'm gonna die this way."

Margera said he hadn't been back to Castle Bam in 10 months, and on this June afternoon, was paying Andrew Mehan, a former bouncer in West Chester, for boxing lessons.

Mehan had to kick Margera out of some West Chester bars back in the day. He'd seen Margera in worse shape.

"Come on, get up," he commanded.

Suddenly, Margera would rise from his rest with a groan – he still smokes – and snap a few jabs at Mehan.

His father, Phil, the lovable victim of countless pranks and a few punches from Bam over the years, sat in the wings, beaming with pride as his son countered with a few jabs.

"Yeah, he put me through it, but I'll sit through anything as long as he's sober," Phil said.

Margera's solo show, "Viva La Bam," was set almost entirely in and around "Castle Bam," his notorious home and compound in Pocopson Township, Chester County, and also at his parents' home. The show ran for five seasons on MTV, from October 2003 to August 2005.

Many of Castle Bam's mainstays were still there: purple luxury cars – a Bentley and Audi in the driveway – skateboard decks on the walls, and lots of Margera's paintings leaning against the walls. Margera described his style as "Jackson Pollock-ish."

One skateboard deck featured Ryan Dunn, another steady fixture at Castle Bam back in the day. Dunn, Margera's longtime friend and a fellow "Jackass" star, died in a fiery crash after a night of drinking in Chester County in 2011. The two met at 15, at West Chester East High School, and were nearly inseparable thereafter. In the wake of Dunn's death, Margera turned to food and alcohol – pints of vodka and Gatorade, food binges followed by purges – to deal with the grief.

Margera was interviewed by a television station at the scene. He was mostly sobbing, and when asked how he would get through it, he said he "couldn't."

On this June afternoon, there were people, young and old, everywhere at the Castle: in the pool, putting skateboards together, or doing yard work. His wife doesn't love the cold, so he didn't plan on spending too much time back at the Castle or any one place, for very long. Pocopson Township, he said, cracked down on his ability to host big gatherings and do outlandish stunts.

"I love Pennsylvania, but I love to travel too," he said. "Boredom is my trigger."

Friends popped in and out, including Dennis Wood, a West Chester native who used to skate at Margera's as a teen.

"Obviously, there's been trials and tribulations throughout the years; he took some steps forward, some steps back," Wood said. "In the last couple of years, this is the best I've seen him."

Margera had very public fallouts with his family during the worst years, too. He was charged with assaulting his brother at Castle Bam in 2023.

Margera's mother, April, said his legal issues have been resolved and that he seems to be "out of the darkness." She went to California with him and Phil recently to visit Phoenix Wolf.

"I would like to say I'm really proud of him. He came a long way. We've all been through the fire and brimstone, and we seem to be coming out on the other side," April said in a text message.

Novak, a former star of "Jackass" and "Viva La Bam" who now owns sober living houses in Delaware and New Jersey, said Margera's family was always the grounding force, a source of unconditional love, and he was happy to hear the Margeras have made amends.

He also loves that Margera is skating again.

"Where he seems to be now is a healing stage," Novak said recently. "To what degree, I can't speak on, but it's better than it was when he wasn't speaking to his family or the majority of his friends."

Margera started skateboarding as a teen, with Phil driving him all over the area to pursue his passion, including the late Love Park and FDR Park. Margera's earliest stunts appeared in videos for his brother's alt-metal band, CKY, and he got noticed by MTV. His crew was teamed up with other wild men, like Johnny Knoxville and Steve-O. "Jackass" was born. Margera and Dunn were featured in the first episode on Oct. 1, 2000, riding – crashing, rather – shopping carts.

Phil watched his son's recent torturous boxing lesson with pride.

"He's still cute, even at 46," Phil said.

When the final sparring round was over, Mehan helped pull Margera's gloves off. Margera slumped down and took deep breaths. A few minutes later, he shuffled out of the gym and walked straight into the deep end of the pool, fully clothed.

"I need to quit smoking," he said along the way.

Mehan put the day's boxing lesson into a deeper perspective while he unwrapped his own hands.

"That's the worst he'll ever look," Mehan said of the boxing lesson. "Here's the deal: he fought through it. He kept saying he was done, that he wanted to quit, but he kept going."

BOOKS

A toast to the tuba
and the value of music education

By MATTHEW J. PALM
Orlando Sentinel (TNS)

When the book "The Perfect Tuba" landed on my desk, I thought, "I'll have to ask Robert Carpenter about this." Every Central Florida music fan knows he's the go-to guy for all things tuba.

Turns out "Perfect Tuba" author Sam Quinones had the same thought; I quickly realized Carpenter was interviewed and contributed to the book, which offers interesting info about the local tuba culture.

I hear you repeating, perhaps with a tad of disbelief, "local tuba culture"? But, wait, it gets better: At one time, Orlando was nationally known as a hotbed for tuba music. Who knew?

Well, Carpenter for one. He has been the principal tuba player for the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra since its inception in 1993.

He remembers discussing the unusually large local tuba-playing population with colleagues back in the 1990s.

"In the middle of the night at a pizza joint, we said, 'How many professional tuba players are in Orlando?'" he recalls. "We counted 26."

That's a lot of brass.

As Quinones' engaging book explains, like so many entertainment-related facets of Central Florida life, this was down to Disney. Across the theme parks, you could find tuba players in a variety of shows and parades.

"No American city so small had acquired so many tuba players so quickly as Orlando, Florida," Quinones writes of that golden age some 30-plus years ago. "The phone tree was almost magical. A call would go out, and soon two dozen tubists would appear at the Ale House to drink Guinness until the wee hours. … They formed a tuba scene that lasted a decade – playing constantly, drinking often, challenging each other to improve."

As Disney downsized its complement of musicians, that tuba scene faded. But Orlando wasn't done with the instrument – not by a long shot.

Nancy Brigham / Orlando Sentinel / TNS

Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra tuba player Robert Carpenter plays in a 1997 concert in Kissimmee.

Carpenter – who didn't play at Walt Disney World until years after that scene's heyday – and friend Tom Treece were busy trying to perfect the sound of the tuba, an endeavor Quinones documents in the book. The Orlando Philharmonic played a part: Carpenter would experiment with different tubas during rehearsals to compare the sound quality.

"We were so fortunate," he says. "Who has that? Who has a professional orchestra to do your testing?"

He credits former Philharmonic music director Christopher Wilkins with giving the go-ahead for the experimentation.

"He was part of it, giving opinions," Carpenter recalls. "I told Chris what I was doing, and he was interested. I warned him, 'It's going to look like chaos back there,' and he said, 'That's fine, you do it.'"

The Orlando chapters of "The Perfect Tuba" are scattered among the book's uplifting main narrative of how providing youngsters with access to music education can change their lives – give them a feeling of belonging, provide a sense of purpose, teach them discipline and help with their academics.

To Carpenter, "that is by far the most important part of the book. In comparison, I am inconsequential in this."

He hopes readers take the book's lessons about the importance of music education to heart – whether it involves a tuba or some other instrument.

"Music education is a game changer for society," he says. "It saves so many kids."

He points to himself as an example of what music instruction can do. Of course, like many described in Quinones' book, he stumbled into playing the tuba.

One day in seventh grade, Carpenter skipped a class he didn't like and went to the band room. The band director was a neighbor who often drove Carpenter to school.

"I said, 'I don't like my class, and I'd like to join the band instead,'" Carpenter recalls. "No better way to put a big smile on a band director's face. He said, 'I'll take care of the paperwork.'"

The only question was, what would Carpenter play?

"I hadn't paid attention when they taught the instruments, so I said, 'I'll play anything,'" – another way to make a band director grin. "And he said, 'Would you like to play the tuba?'"

The rest, of course, is history.

Also a professional engineer, Carpenter would go on to research tubas, build tubas, and generally "spend all my life pushing valves." At one point, he owned 32 tubas; he says he's down to 15 or so now.

He's happy the book is raising the profile of his chosen instrument.

"It's interesting there's this much passion about tubas," he says. "I'm not the only one."

But he's equally content to let the allure of the tuba remain a little mysterious, known only to the musicians who are rarely in the spotlight and usually found tucked away in a corner of the orchestra.

"It's all by people who sit in the back row," Carpenter chuckles. "We have a lot of fun back there, but nobody knows it."

How Reyna Grande's 'Migrant Heart' drew inspiration from Sandra Cisneros

By ERIK PEDERSEN
The Orange County Register (TNS)

Reyna Grande, author of "The Distance Between Us" and "A Dream Called Home," has just published a new memoir, "Migrant Heart."

Here, Grande shares stories via email about how the book and audiobook came together, as well as what it was like to return to her high school in Los Angeles.

Q: Please tell readers about your new memoir, "Migrant Heart."

A: "Migrant Heart" is my very first memoir-in-essays. My previous memoirs – "The Distance Between Us" and "A Dream Called Home" – were written chronologically. They were told right from the perspective of the child, teenager, or young adult, I was as those events unfolded.

"Migrant Heart" is different. It's told entirely from the perspective of the adult Reyna. It means I get to look back and reflect on the moments that truly shaped me into the woman, wife, mother, and writer I am today.

Across the 20 essays in the collection, I explore themes of migration, family separation, and language trauma, as well as motherhood, breaking cycles, and the writing life. I also open up about heavier, deeply personal topics like sexual abuse, aging, and menopause. Ultimately, the emotional arc of the book is about learning how to reframe my trauma and intentionally make space for joy, not just sadness. My hope is that it invites readers to embark on their own journeys toward healing.

Q: What's something – a fact, a bit of dialogue, or something else – that has stayed with you from a recent reading?

A: The first thing that comes to mind is an interaction I just had yesterday! I was invited to speak at my old middle school, Luther Burbank in Highland Park. It was my very first time back since I graduated in 1990.

Walking around that campus was an incredibly bittersweet experience. I kept getting these intense flashbacks to when I was just a lonely, frightened girl. Back then, I was still reeling from the trauma of crossing the border and the years of family separation when my parents had to leave me in Mexico. I was struggling to learn English and desperately trying to figure out where I fit in.

To return to those same halls as a successful author – as someone who actually did carve out a place for herself here – was surreal. Standing in front of those students, I was so darn proud to let them see the woman I've become. Honestly, looking out at them felt like I was speaking directly to my younger self. When I was encouraging them to chase their dreams, it felt like I was traveling back in time just to tell teenage Reyna, "You can do it."

Q: Do you have any favorite book covers?

A: I'm probably supposed to talk about other writers' covers, but I have to be completely honest here – I am absolutely in love with my own! The cover for "Migrant Heart" is just stunning. In fact, I love it so much that I sewed a custom jacket for myself to perfectly match the book jacket! I've been wearing it to all my book tour events. The gorgeous artwork was designed by artist Calavera_Catrina, and she's even offered to create a special tattoo design for me based on it. So, soon, I'm going to have my book cover tattooed right on my arm. That is just how much I adore it!

Q: Do you listen to audiobooks? If so, are there any titles or narrators you'd recommend?

A: I absolutely do, and Sandra Cisneros – who is one of my absolute favorite authors – does a truly wonderful job narrating her own books. I love listening to them just to hear the rhythm of her voice. A few years ago, she and I were talking about audiobooks, and she asked me why I didn't narrate mine. I admitted to her that I felt deeply insecure about my accent. Back when I was a young English Language Learner, kids at school would make fun of the way I spoke, and I really internalized that shame. For a long time, I avoided it because I just didn't like the sound of my own voice.

But Sandra convinced me that I needed to give it a shot. And you know what? I finally did. I narrated "Migrant Heart" myself! For me, it became a way of finally embracing how I speak and healing that childhood trauma of being mocked or made to feel like something was wrong with my voice. It was terrifying, but it was also incredibly empowering. I'd love to invite readers to give the audiobook a try!

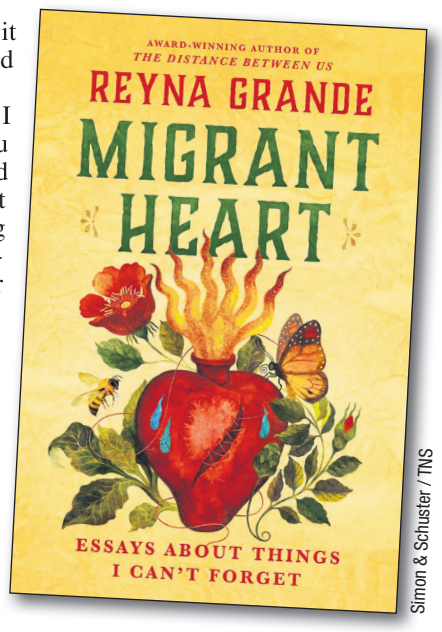
Q: Do you have a favorite character or quote from a book?

A: When I was writing "Migrant Heart," I kept a few quotes from the books I was reading for inspiration and wove them into my essays. Three really stayed with me.

1. Viet Thanh Nguyen, from his novel "The Sympathizer": "Remember, you're not half of anything, you're twice of everything!" When my daughter was little, I mistakenly taught her to see herself as half Mexican and half White (she has a White father from Wisconsin), without realizing that identifying as 'half' keeps you from ever feeling whole. When I read Nguyen's quote, I knew it was exactly what I should have been telling my daughter all along.

2. Melissa Febos, from "Body Work": "Being healed by writing does not excuse you from the extravagantly hard work of making good art." As a memoirist, it's crucial to remember this. Writing about our trauma can be incredibly healing, but we are still creating art for an audience. We can't lose sight of the craft – the pacing, the structure, the narrative arc. The story needs to hold meaning for the reader, not just for the writer. As I was writing "Migrant Heart," I always kept that quote in my mind.

3. Ocean Vuong from their novel "On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous": "I don't want my sadness to be othered from me just as I don't want my happiness to be othered. They're both mine. I made them, dammit." For the longest time, I kept my happiness out of my work, convinced that meaningful art only came from poking at my wounds. But at this stage in my life, I'm finally ready to make space for both. I want to write from a place of wholeness – allowing the trauma and the triumph to coexist on the page.



Simon & Schuster / TNS

Q: Is there a topic you'll always read about?

A: I love reading immigrant stories. I love reading them as much as I love writing them. Some of my favorites are "Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits" by Laila Lalami, "Dear America" by Jose Antonio Vargas, "Solito" by Javier Zamora, "Someone Like Me" by Julissa Arce, "The Undocumented Americans" by Karla Cornejo Villavicencio, "Enrique's Journey" by Sonia Nazario, and "Tell Me How it Ends" by Valeria Luiselli.

Q: What do you look for in a book?

A: I am looking for that moment when I say, "I wish I'd written that book!" Honestly, my editor brain is almost always on when I read. I'm usually studying the pacing, the structure, or the narrative arcs. So, when a book is crafted so seamlessly that I completely forget about the mechanics and just get swept away as a reader, that's when I know it's something special.

BESTSELLERS

Here are the bestsellers for the week that ended Saturday, June 20, compiled from data from independent and chain bookstores, book wholesalers and independent distributors nationwide, powered by Circana BookScan.

Hardcover fiction

1. Yesteryear. Caro Claire Burke. Knopf
2. Whistler. Ann Patchett. Harper
3. The Calamity Club. Kathryn Stockett. Spiegel & Grau
4. Our Perfect Storm. Carley Fortune. Berkley
5. Rocket's Red Glare. Patterson/Eversmann. Little, Brown
6. Choke Point. Brad Thor. Atria
7. Harvest Season. Brynne Weaver. Slowburn
8. A Parade of Horribles. Matt Dinniman. Ace
9. The Raven at the Ash Door. K.A. Linde. Red Tower
10. This Inevitable Ruin. Matt Dinniman. Ace

Hardcover nonfiction

1. Communion. JD Vance. Harper
2. School Years Scrapbook. Thunder Bay
3. The Land and Its People. David Sedaris. Little, Brown
4. Strangers. Belle Burden. Dial
5. Courage Can Save Us. Rye Barcott. Bloomsbury
6. Stripped Down. Bunnie Xo. Dey Street
7. The Crooked Places Made Straight. Raphael G. Warnock. Penguin Press
8. The King Is Coming. John Bevere. Thomas Nelson
9. London Falling. Patrick Radden Keefe. Doubleday
10. The Freedom-Based Business Method. Natalie Ellis. Hay House Business

Trade paperback

1. Theo of Golden. Allen Levi. Atria
2. The Divorce. Freida McFadden. Poisoned Pen
3. Dungeon Crawler Carl. Matt Dinniman. Ace
4. The Someday Garden. Ashley Poston. Berkley
5. Atmosphere. Taylor Jenkins Reid. Ballantine
6. Dolly All the Time. Annabel Monaghan. Putnam
7. Rules For the Summer. Meghan Quinn. Bloom
8. Credence (deluxe ed.). Penelope Douglas. Berkley
9. Want to Know a Secret? Freida McFadden. Poisoned Pen
10. To Flame a Wild Flower. Sarah A. Parker. Avon

Reprinted from Publishers Weekly.

Homilies, addresses of Pope Leo XIV are now coming to English readers

NEW YORK — A collection of early public writings by the future Pope Leo XIV will be published this fall for the first time in English.

"Freedom Under Grace: Reflections on the Spiritual Tradition That Formed Me" is scheduled for Sept. 15, according to Image Books, an imprint of the Penguin Random House Christian Publishing Group.

Released in Italian by the Vatican Publishing House earlier this year, "Freedom from Grace" features homilies, addresses and other works by Robert Prevost, when he was prior general of the Order of Saint Augustine from 2001 to 2013.

"Each chapter is a window into the spiritual depth and vision of the man who would eventually become Pope Leo, with an urgent message of love and service to address the challenges of the world today," said Campbell Wharton, senior vice president and publisher of Penguin Random House Christian.

AUTOMOTIVE

AUTO REVIEWS

The anti-Tesla? Bezos-backed Slate wants to sell you less car for less money

By LARRY PRINTZ
Tribune News Service (TNS)

2027 Slate Pickup Truck

Base price: $24,950

Powertrain: Single motor, rear-wheel drive

Horsepower/Torque: 181/195 pound-feet

Estimated range: 205 miles

Recharge time (240V, 20-80%): 4 hours

Length/Width/Height: 175/71/68 inches

Ground clearance: 7.8 inches

Bed length: 5 feet

Payload: 1,550 pounds

Towing capacity: 2,000 pounds

For decades, Detroit has operated on a simple premise: bigger vehicles, more features, higher prices. Trucks and SUVs that once prioritized utility have steadily evolved into rolling luxury suites packed with screens, software, and ever-expanding sticker prices. Affordability, meanwhile, has become increasingly elusive.

Which is what makes Michigan-based Slate Auto's arrival so striking.

Backed in part by Jeff Bezos, the startup is making a contrarian bet in an industry that has spent years moving in the opposite direction. Its first vehicle, the Slate Truck, starts at $24,950 before destination charge. That's less than half the average price of a new electric vehicle in the United States. The pitch is not that consumers need more technology. It's that they may have had enough of it.

The truck's appeal is obvious. Modern pickups have become so enormous that you need air traffic control clearance to back out of a supermarket parking space. These five-ton chrome rhinoceroses cost so much that owners speak of them in the tone normally reserved for lakefront property.

Designed and engineered in Michigan and California, and built in Indiana, the Slate truck itself feels almost radical in its restraint. Like the Ford Model T, it comes in a single color: slate gray. Composite body panels bolt onto a steel frame, making customization and wraps relatively simple. Inside, there is no towering infotainment screen and no built-in audio system. Buyers can add speakers if they want them or simply use a Bluetooth speaker and the smartphone that already serves as their navigation, entertainment, and communications hub. There are power locks and old-fashioned roll-up windows. Physical knobs and switches remain. The design isn't nostalgic so much as skeptical of the industry's assumption that every inconvenience requires another screen, subscription, or layer of software.

That philosophy of simplicity and reductionism, of doing more with less, permeates the company. The truck can convert between pickup and SUV configurations, supported by hundreds of accessories and customization options. Rather than forcing buyers up expensive trim ladders, Slate is selling flexibility after the purchase.

"We believe customers should choose what goes in their vehicles," Slate CEO Peter Faricy said. "We believe ownership should be simple, and we believe innovation should be focused on making products easier to afford."

The Slate Truck's specifications are similarly modest: roughly 205 miles of range, 181 horsepower, an eight-second sprint to 60 mph and a top speed of 90 mph. The numbers won't dominate internet forums. That's precisely the point.

Inside Slate Auto, executives describe the company using words rarely heard in modern automotive circles: frugal, scrappy, reductive. Engineers debated whether even air conditioning belonged in the vehicle before deciding it had earned its place. Designers relentlessly reused components. The same taillamp fits both sides of the vehicle. Every door shares the same handle. Even the armrest padding doubles as the lid for the optional center console. The result is a vehicle built with fewer than 800 parts, compared with roughly 6,000 in a typical vehicle – a simplification that lowers both manufacturing complexity and cost.

The result is not merely a cheaper truck. It's an attempt to rethink the economics of building one.

Slate plans to produce the vehicle in a repurposed Indiana factory, a move executives say saved hundreds of millions of dollars compared with building a traditional plant. The company claims more than 180,000 reservations and will back the vehicle with a 10-year, 110,000-mile battery and powertrain warranty, alongside a four-year, 50,000-mile bumper-to-bumper warranty.

And there's more innovation to come. Faricy hinted that the company would offer a unique delivery process, one that includes the extra-cost option of having it delivered to your home. The company also plans to offer financing and insurance as well, making the process of buying, financing and insuring a Slate Truck a one-stop process that can be done in the comfort of your home from your computer.

And despite the company's Amazon connection, don't expect an Amazon Prime deal anytime soon. "I've got good news," Faricy said. "All customers of Slate get the same price."

That's something a car dealer will never promise.

The broader wager is straightforward: that the auto industry didn't simply overcomplicate the automobile, it overthought and overpriced it. And somewhere, beneath the layers of leather, software, subscriptions, and screens, consumers may still want something remarkably old-fashioned: a practical truck they can actually afford.

There is, of course, an irony embedded in this story.

Slate's rebellion against technological excess is being financed, in part, by one of the fortunes most closely associated with technological disruption itself. The company is betting that the next innovation in transportation may not be adding more, but less.

The modern economy has spent decades convincing us that every object requires an app, a subscription, a login, a password reset, and three mandatory software updates. The Slate Truck appears to have looked at all this and asks an obvious question: What if the truck minded its own business?

Larry Printz is an automotive journalist based in South Florida.

Road trippin' in the Infiniti QX80 Sport mega-ute

By HENRY PAYNE
The Detroit News (TNS)

It's construction season in the Midwest, and there's no better way to navigate it than in a mega-ute. Not in a sedan (WHUMP! Those road seams are harsh). Not in a compact SUV (YIKES! Those semis are huge!). Not in a sport scar (YIKES! Those road seams are harsh and those semis are huuuuge!).

In a mega-ute. Like my 2026 Infiniti QX80 Sport tester.

With three palatial rows of seats, tons of cargo room, 38-inches of tech-tastic digital screens, and 450 horsepower in the engine room below decks, this ocean liner was the perfect family hauler for my five-hour trip to Indianapolis for a Father's Day weekend racing cars with my two boys.

Well, almost the perfect vehicle. The made-in-Japan QX80 Sport is the luxury brand's latest volley as it takes on Detroit's formidable foursome of luxury mega-utes: the Cadillac Escalade, GMC Yukon, Lincoln Navigator and Jeep Grand Wagoneer.

Like asking Karl-Anthony Towns to guard fellow 7-footers Nikola Jokic, Joel Embiid, Kevin Durant and Victor Wembanyama, it's a tough ask. The Knicks center is talented but lacks key attributes that make the others MVP candidates.

So, too, the talented QX80.

BRAWWRRGGH! I stormed around an interstate cloverleaf like an SUV two classes smaller. Like GM's athletic truck chassis that undergirds Escalade and Yukon, the 17½-foot-long, 3-ton Infiniti was balanced and fun to drive. Especially in SPORT mode, which activated the air suspension to lower the beast's center of gravity.

BRAWWRRGGH! I floored the right pedal and lashed the 450 horses in front of me. The quiet cabin suddenly filled with the glorious bass of a twin-turbocharged V-6 engine. The mega-ute class was defined by mega-V8s, but QX80's 3.5-liter mill packed plenty of punch when I needed to:

1) Merge onto the interstate

2) Pass on a two-lane road

3) Enjoy myself after miles of 60-mph orange-construction-barrel zones

Ugh. Construction barrels. Miles of them down Interstate 475, U.S. 24, I-69 and the I-465 beltway that surrounded Indianapolis like a tourniquet. The injured roads exposed the downside of the nimble QX80's stiff chassis: a rough ride.

Ladder frames are less flexible than unibody SUVs like the compact QX60, and QX80's suspension couldn't mask the bumps like Detroit's deft mega-utes. WHUMPA WHUMP WHUMP went Infiniti over a series of seams.

"I could feel that in my lower back after a while," said my 34-year-old son in the rear seat after an interminable Indy construction zone.

My $107K QX80 Sport's roomy, blue-leather interior and high-tech, however, are made for long road trips.

I (and my 6-foot-plus sons) could easily sit behind myself in the second row and third row. Generous legroom is augmented by QX80's independent rear suspension that (like the IRS designs in the Cadillac, GMC and Lincoln models) is a major upgrade to the solid-axle pickup platform on which these land yachts are based.

The design allows for better third-row footwell space as well as better driving dynamics as previously noted. It's a leg up for Infiniti on chief Japanese mega-ute rival Lexus GX – which, oddly, neglects IRS.

Notice how much easier it is to pass time on family road trips? I'm from the counting-cows generation, when there was nothing to do but tally heifers or play 20 questions. Sigh.

Today we have Google.

"Hey, Google, is Caitlin Clark playing in this weekend's Indian Fever game?"

"Who is the Fever playing?"

"Is Raising Cane's chicken available in Indiana?"

"Hey, Google, how many cows in Indiana?"

The conversation is endless, thanks to rapidly advancing AI tools. Like the GM twins, Escalade and Yukon, QX80 comes standard with the Google Built-in operating system. That means an interface familiar to my Android Auto app (Mrs. Payne uses Apple CarPlay) that doesn't suck the juice from my phone while in operation.

On rural I-69, I engaged the native Google OS.

"Hey Google, find fast food on my route."

"I'm sorry, something went wrong," repeatedly came the reply.

Seems Android Auto had a better connection for the 315-mile journey, so I stuck with that. Using speakers embedded in the driver's headrest, Google Maps fed me instructions and info across the fruited plain. That meant keeping my hard-working phone charged on Infiniti's wireless charging pad – a pad not up to the task.

It was the first of a series of tech tics where QX80 lagged its Detroit competitive set.

Not only did the charging pad fail to maintain adequate phone charge (a problem I've not had in other modern cars), but my phone became overheated, provoking a warning on the center touchscreen.

No worries, I moved on to Plan B. Or Plan USB, if you will. I pulled out a USB charging cord I travel with, and ... QX80 only provides USB-C connections. Oh.

Plan C. I looked for a 110-volt plug like King Caddy provides in its second row. QX80's solution? A dated, 12-volt, cigarette-lighter port. Happily, I carry that auxiliary item in my laptop bag too, so that my phone stayed charged for the duration of the trip.

The QX80 suffers other ergonomic blind spots. Second-row seats had automatic recline buttons, but no quick-collapse buttons like Caddy. It offered a gorgeous console climate-control screen, but clumsy console shifter buttons instead of a convenient steering-stalk shifter.

Applause, on the other hand, for its Invisible Hood View feature that allowed me to precisely place the wheels in my crowded Indy race paddock. And you thought only Superman had laser vision.

The biggest arrow missing from QX80 Sport's quiver is hands-free driving.

Henry Payne / The Detroit News / TNS

Cadillac, GMC and Lincoln offer this mapped feature across their lineup, making road trips a breeze. QX80? It's only available on the top, $113K Autograph trim. My Sport tester's adaptive cruise control was fine – but lagged the capability of ACC systems in compact SUVs like the Kia Sportage at half the price.

Unmapped construction zones require hands-on driving in vehicles not named Tesla – but on long stretches of freeway, GM Super Cruise and Lincoln BlueCruise take fatigue out of driving while allowing me to, say, enjoy my Raising Cane's chicken strips and a Snapple while the big ocean liners drive themselves.

Crossing the border into Indiana from Ohio, the price of premium gas (required by that powerful V-6) suddenly dropped from $5.30 a gallon to $4.30.

"Hey, Google, why is gas so much cheaper in Indiana?" I asked.

"Gov. Braun suspended the state's gas sales tax to provide financial relief to drivers following the Iran conflict," came the Google reply.

Perfect for mega-ute road trips.

Henry Payne is auto critic for The Detroit News.

2026 Infiniti QX80

★★★

Vehicle type: Rear-or-all-wheel drive, seven-passenger mega-SUV

Price: $85,940, including $2,245 destination charge ($107,815 Sport as tested)

Powerplant: 3.5-liter, twin-turbo-charged V-6

Power: 450 horsepower, 526 pound-feet of torque

Transmission: 9-speed automatic

Performance: 0-60 mph, 6.1 seconds (Car and Driver); towing capacity, 8,500 pounds

Weight: 6,127 pounds (as tested)

Fuel economy: EPA 16 mpg city/19 highway/17 combined

Report card

Highs: Bold road presence; three roomy rows

Lows: Rough ride; lags competition in tech

TECHNOLOGY

GADGETS

Water gun is a blast

The SpyraFour.
Spyra / TNS

By GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

It's hard to say what is my favorite product review of all time, but if I had a top 10 list, the Spyra water blaster (or water gun, as I still call it) would be at or near the top.

Spyra, known for its innovative and impressive water blasters, has launched its latest model: the **SpyraFour**. Spyra touts it as their most advanced and innovative water blaster, featuring a large, top-mounted digital display. When you select the blast mode you want from the five choices, it's displayed on top, along with your ammunition level (water) and power level. An on/off switch is on the bottom, along with a USB-C charging port under a rubber cover. It's important to cover the port when it's not in use, to keep it dry.

The five blast modes include open mode, which shoots powerful mid-range single shots, and burst mode, which shoots triple mid-range bursts for what they call instant domination. The storm mode, which is my go-to, shoots relentless, rapid-fire water bursts. The power mode is for heavy, long-range precision strikes up to 50 feet, and the rage mode ramps up speed.

A fully charged battery lasts for up to 2,500 water blasts. A fully loaded SpyraFour will fire up to 28 blasts. What's really amazing is reloading the tank, which takes 12 seconds. Spyra has an optional water bladder, the foldable SpyraBase. Place the SpyraFour on its top side in the water, set it to reload, and a few seconds later, you're ready for your next burst.

During a backyard get-together, no matter who I handed the SypraFour to, they came away stunned by how powerful, accurate, and how much fun it is. Knocking down empty beverage cans at a distance was no challenge for the SypraFour. The more serious players can use the three game modes.

Caution should always be used; do not point it at another person. Spyra rates the water blasters for ages 14 and up.

https://spyra.com/products/spyrafour, $169.95

The **Gyroor C1Plus 1000-watt electric scooter** checks a lot of boxes when it comes to practicality. Not only does it eliminate the need for gas, but after several months of use, I can confidently say it's simply a lot of fun to ride.

Its usefulness goes well beyond transportation. The electric scooter offers plenty of room to carry your stuff, whether that's a loaded backpack, groceries, or even a pet or two. The dual baskets are designed for both cargo and pets, making the C1Plus a versatile option for running errands, commuting or trolling your neighborhood.

One question I've had myself, and I've been asked frequently, is whether you need a helmet while riding the Gyroor C1Plus. My answer is absolutely yes. I always wear a bicycle helmet when riding. Whether a helmet is legally required depends on your local regulations, so it's worth checking your city or state requirements. Regardless of the law, wearing a helmet is a simple way to add an extra layer of safety every time you ride.

It's delivered in a large box and pre-assembled, except for a few simple parts that took no time to add. This included attaching and securing the handlebars, the 3-inch-thick padded seat, both baskets, and a padded pet cushion. Tools were included.

It has a 650-watt brushless motor, which peaks at 1000 watts. The included AC adapter runs the scooter with a 48-volt 10.4AH high-capacity battery. It's rated to run about 30 miles per charge, though that can vary depending on your speed. It has a peak speed of 18.6 mph. The front and rear disc brakes worked perfectly, and the superior shock absorbers, along with the 14-inch wheels, delivered a smooth and comfortable ride.

A headlight and a taillight are both preinstalled and shine brightly at night. Gyroor lists it with a climbing capacity of 15 degrees and a maximum load of 300 pounds. This includes the driver (age 12 and up) and cargo. The Gyroor C1Plus has an IPX4 rating, which makes it water-resistant, not waterproof. So if it's raining, I'd find a different form of transportation.

The front basket, which sits at the bottom of the frame between the seat column and the steering column, measures 20 by 12 by 10 inches and features a quick-release side door for easy in-and-out access for your pet. My 35-pound dog wanted no part of it, but my 9-pound dog didn't want the rides to stop.

The handlebars are adjustable from 40 to 44 inches for riders 5-foot-1 to 6-foot-5. When you want the scooter in the back of your SUV, it folds up easily. There are many accessories available to purchase, and I'd highly recommend the round folding side mirrors ($29.99).

https://gyroorboard.com/products/gyroor-c1plus-electric-scooter-650w-with-big-seat-carry-basket-ul2272?variant=51643973271845, $799.99

Satechi's 3-in-1 Foldable Wireless Charging Stand is a premium travel-ready charger with Qi2 25-watt charging.

Its design allows it to fold up for travel. Or just drop it in your backpack when moving from work to home or vice versa. Wherever you use it, the desktop charging stand simultaneously charges an iPhone with MagSafe, an Apple Watch and your AirPods.

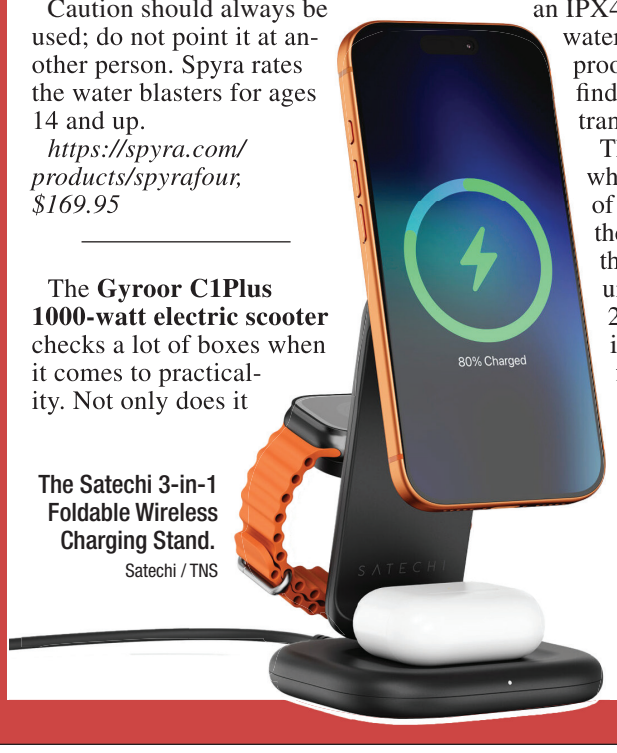
The 3.5-by-3.5-by-6.2-inch charging stand will supply an iPhone with up to 25 watts of safe Qi2 charging power, 5 watts to AirPods, and 5 watts to an Apple Watch. Compatibility is not restricted to Apple devices; other smartphones with MagSafe/Qi features, and true wireless earbuds with charging cases will also charge. Charging is safe for a wide range of Qi and Qi2-compatible devices.

MagSafe smartphones on the charger can be placed in landscape or portrait orientation with an adjustable 160-degree viewing angle. It's built with soft silicone covers to protect the charging items, Zinc alloy hinges for stability, and bottom-side rubber grips to keep it slip-free.

A 45W USB-C power adapter with US, EU, and UK plug options is included.

https://satechi.com/products/3-in-1-foldable-wireless-charging-stand-with-qi2-25w, $129.99

Contact Gregg Ellman at greggellman@mac.com. Follow him on Twitter @greggellman.

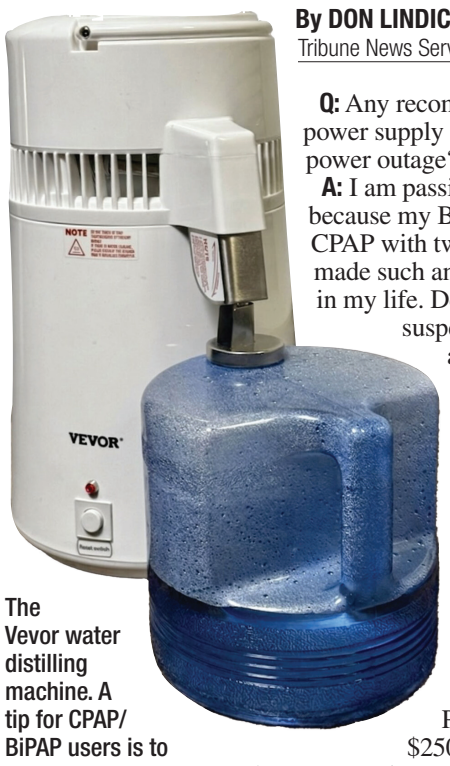


The Satechi 3-in-1 Foldable Wireless Charging Stand.
Satechi / TNS

The Gyroor C1Plus 1000-watt electric scooter.
Gyroor / TNS

SOUND ADVICE

Backup power supply and water distilling machine tips for CPAP users



The Vevor water distilling machine. A tip for CPAP/BiPAP users is to get your own water distilling machine.
Don Lindich / TNS

By DON LINDICH
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Q: Any recommendations for a power supply for a CPAP during a power outage? – J.F., Pittsburgh

A: I am passionate about this topic because my BiPAP (a version of CPAP with two pressure levels) has made such an amazing difference in my life. Dear readers, if you suspect you have sleep apnea, please do a sleep study. Treating my sleep apnea is one of the best things I have ever done for myself!

If I sleep without my BiPAP I suffer, and besides my whole-house generator I do have a portable battery-powered power station backup. Plan on spending over $250 because otherwise the power station may not have enough stored capacity to get you through the night. (Usually the product listings will say how long the station can power the CPAP.)

I use an Anker Solix C1000 Gen 1 which is rugged, charges very quickly, has tremendous capacity and can run a CPAP machine for an amazing 18.6 hours on a charge. The C1000 can power many other things as well, including running a refrigerator for up to 14 hours. You can set it up as a backup so it will run your CPAP or refrigerator while the power is out, and switch back to the outlet when power is restored. If it saves a single refrigerator full of food it could pay for itself, and the batteries are rated to last a long 10 years. The C1000 is a high-tech, premium-quality product and an excellent value at $429. At the time I wrote this it was on sale for $399, with a code on the manufacturer website for an additional $31 off. ankersolix.com

Check and see if your CPAP machine's manufacturer offers a DC power supply cord for a 12V accessory socket. Many power stations (including the C1000 Gen 1) have this socket, and if you use the socket with a DC cord your power station's battery charge will last 10 percent to 30 percent longer.

Another tip for CPAP/BiPAP users is to get your own water distilling machine. I only use distilled water and am very strict about it, and at first bought my distilled water at the store. However, I would often run out at an inopportune time and have trouble finding it in stock. I finally got frustrated enough to buy a Vevor water distiller, and it has been a fantastic investment. You fill the stainless steel tank up to the line with water, put the top on, set up the receiving bottle and press start. A few hours later you have a gallon of freshly distilled water. I usually transfer it to an empty bottle immediately, then make another gallon so I always have a gallon in reserve and never run out. The current Amazon price for the Vevor distiller is $66.90.

I also bought an eight-pack of Aquapap 8-ounce bottles of distilled water on Amazon for approximately $23. One bottle in the humidifier tank is sufficient for a single night of sleep, so if I am going away for three days I pack three 8-ounce bottles in my suitcase. When I received my order from Amazon there was a note from the seller saying I could save next time by ordering directly from their website, but why in the world would there be a next time? Those little bottles of water work out to $46 per gallon! Now that I have the bottles I just bring home the empties in my suitcase, refill them with water from my distiller and I'm ready for my next trip.

Contact Don Lindich at www.soundadvicenews.com.

A few ways to extend the life of your old TV

By JIM ROSSMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

A few weeks back I answered a reader question about smart TVs and if their streaming apps would get too old to work well.

My advice was yes, older smart TVs can fall behind on their software updates, and my main advice was to bite the bullet and spend the money on a new TV.

I should have gone a bit deeper and made a few other recommendations.

I heard from another reader after that column ran and he rightfully scolded me for simply recommending people get rid of their older TVs without considering all the options for keeping it going.

Some older TVs may still show a very good picture, but their built-in streaming apps might be slowing down. So, recommending people dump those sets was a bit short-sighted.

You can keep an older TV going longer by adding a streaming TV device like a Roku, Apple TV or Google TV streamer.

In fact, my mother-in-law's main TV is a hand-me-down from her nephew. It's a 16-year-old Panasonic plasma TV that was a great set, but made well before the days of streaming apps or smart TVs.

The TV in her bedroom is an equally old Samsung LED that also lacks any streaming capability.

When she cut the cord, I bought Roku streaming boxes for both her TVs.

You can purchase a Roku streaming stick or box for less than $40, but there are models that are faster and offer 4K resolution that can cost up to $100.

Apple TV 4K will start around $150 while I've seen the Google TV steamer on sale for around $80 (the regular price is $99).

These boxes connect to your TV through an HDMI port. You connect the box to your home internet service through Wi-Fi or an Ethernet cable.

With these streaming boxes, you'll get a simple remote that includes volume keys and navigation buttons, but no number buttons. Most streaming services don't have channel numbers (some do).

One thing you'll want to do with these streaming devices is take some time and figure out how to make their remote control your TV.

My mother-in-law can turn on her TVs and control the volume with the Roku remote. If you can get all your TV functionality controlled by one remote, you'll be a lot happier.

I also want to mention you can add an over-the-air antenna to bring in local channels if you live close enough to the broadcast towers to receive the signal.

My wife and I still use a TiVo for watching and recording over-the-air channels. The model is the TiVo Bolt OTA, but it's no longer for sale. Tablo TV is an OTA receiver/recorder that a lot of cord cutters recommend.

Jim Rossman is a tech columnist for Tribune News Service. He may be reached at jrossmantechadviser@gmail.com.

Jim Rossman / TNS
A Roku remote.

TRAVEL

An original stretch of the Berlin Wall is now East Side Gallery, the longest open-air art gallery in the world.
Lori Rackl / TNS

Back in Berlin

A 'wall pecker' returns to this cutting-edge capital, where past is still present

By LORI RACKL
Tribune News Service (TNS)

After decades of being lucky enough to travel the world, I've collected more than my fair share of souvenirs. My favorite is a small chunk of the Berlin Wall.

I didn't buy it in a museum gift shop or snag it on eBay. I got it straight from the source back in 1989. That's when the notorious concrete barrier – the ultimate symbol of the Cold War, pitting the communist East against the capitalist West – effectively came crashing down.

When the border opened on that game-changer of a day Nov. 9, I happened to be a college student spending my junior year abroad in England. I hightailed it to Berlin not long after the momentous event, eager to be an eyewitness to what political science majors like me would be studying in the classroom for decades to come.

I arrived by train to a surreal scene. Going from one side of the wall to the other felt like stepping out of a technicolor film into a black-and-white movie. Parts of East Berlin seemed abandoned, almost post-apocalyptic. (Many of the vacant buildings would go on to be filled by young artists, musicians and other creative types who helped cement Berlin's enduring reputation as a capital of cool.)

Along the wall, entrepreneurial folks wearing stonewashed jeans and leather bomber jackets were selling hammers and pickaxes. I bought a couple of tools for a few deutsche marks and started chipping away at the Iron Curtain partition, adding to the chorus of clink-clink-clinks coming from fellow "wall peckers."

It would be 37 years before I returned to Berlin, a trip I made this past spring. I can't blame Berlin being boring as a reason for the nearly four-decade gap between my first and second visit.

This sprawling metropolis – its footprint measures nine times the size of Paris – has plenty to see and do. The nightlife is legendary, even if I've aged out of it. The culinary scene is as wide ranging and diverse as you'd expect in such an international city. Tasty street food like homegrown currywurst and Turkish-influenced doner kebab sandwiches happily coexist with 22 Michelin-starred restaurants. Culture vultures won't go hungry between the offerings on Museum Island and a robust performing arts scene in this hip capital that's celebrating 20 years as a UNESCO City of Design.

But on my long overdue return, I found myself most drawn to what brought me here in the first place: the wall. Most of it is long gone, thanks partly to wall peckers like me. Yet its presence still looms large, from the family-friendly, interactive DDR Museum detailing what it was like to live in East Germany to original sections of the foreboding partition. One segment that's still standing is at the Topography of Terror, a somber tourist attraction about the atrocities of the Nazi regime.

Tourists take photos in front of a guardhouse replica at Checkpoint Charlie, the famous border crossing point between the U.S.-occupied sector of West Berlin and the Soviet's East Berlin.

On a much lighter note, another original expanse of wall has been reborn as the longest open-air art gallery in the world. It stretches for nearly a mile along the banks of the Spree River in what used to be East Berlin. Shortly after the wall fell, 118 painters from 21 countries turned this once-barren strip of concrete into a linear canvas of artistic expression known as the East Side Gallery.

Another example of regained freedom has taken shape as Mauerpark, or wall park in German. This outdoor living room in the pretty Prenzlauer Berg neighborhood used to fall within the "death strip," a heavily guarded area between the parallel walls that separated East and West Berlin. The former no-man's-land has morphed into a popular gathering spot, especially on Sundays when there's a massive flea market and spirited karaoke sessions.

The Berlin Wall Memorial is the best site for understanding the infamous barrier, "that hideous, 28-mile-long scar through the heart of a once proud European capital," as Time magazine described it back then. The memorial spans almost a mile along the road Bernauer Strasse. You can watch an English-language film about the wall at the visitor center. And you can easily spend a couple hours wandering the memorial's outdoor area. It includes a preserved section of the death strip zone and photos of more than 100 people who died at the border, most of them trying to escape East Germany.

The memorial will be especially busy on Aug. 13. It's the main site for ceremonies marking the 65th anniversary of the wall's construction. On that summer day in 1961, the Soviet-controlled East German government hastily began building a barrier to stem the exodus of residents fleeing to the West.

The Cold War heated up fast a couple months later when American and Soviet tanks faced off at Checkpoint Charlie, the famous border crossing point between the U.S.-occupied sector of West Berlin and the Soviet's East Berlin.

Fast-forward 65 years, and tourists flock here to take selfies in front of a replica of the Checkpoint Charlie guardhouse and to pop into the nearby Mauermuseum, or wall museum.

Like most museum gift shops, this one is stocked with souvenirs, including pieces of the wall. I perused shelves full of these concrete nuggets, many of them bigger than mine and in better condition. But my cherished keepsake has something money can't buy. It comes with memories that grow more valuable over time.

TRAVEL TIPS

Extreme weather and safety influencing summer vacations

Americans are becoming increasingly cautious about where and how they travel as geopolitical tensions around the globe, along with the risks associated with extreme weather, continue to be a major factor.

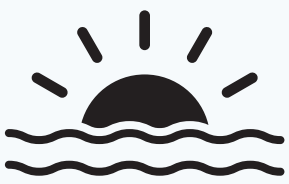
While seven in 10 Americans (70 percent) plan to travel this summer, these same individuals realize that they are navigating a more uncertain global landscape shaped by climate events, geopolitical tensions, and travel disruptions, according to the latest Global Travel Confidence Index from Allianz Partners, which offers new insights into the decisions of American travelers.

The growing concerns among Americans may be contributing to a more domestically-focused summer travel season compared to travelers from other countries. Just 19 percent of Americans plan to travel abroad this summer, significantly lower than the global average of 36 percent, while half (50 percent) say stricter border controls and travel advisories in other countries are swaying their destination choices.

Younger Americans remain the most willing to travel internationally, with 25 percent of those under 35 planning trips abroad, while men are more than twice as likely as women to head to Europe this summer (11 percent vs. 5 percent).

Women, meanwhile, are significantly more likely than men to skip summer travel altogether (36 percent vs. 24%), underscoring how safety concerns and global instability may be disproportionately affecting traveler confidence.

"Travelers today are facing a more complex landscape than ever before," said Emily Hartman, General Manager at Allianz Partners. "With risks like



severe weather, and disruptions on the rise, travelers are being more thoughtful about planning."

Highlights from the latest Global Travel Confidence Index findings include:

■ Safety and Security: Nearly two-thirds of Americans (63 percent) are concerned about the global geopolitical situation, while 62 percent cite broader safety and security concerns as factors shaping their travel decisions. As ongoing conflicts in regions such as Eastern Europe and the Middle East continue to dominate headlines, many travelers are becoming more cautious about international trips and reevaluating where they feel comfortable visiting.

■ Extreme Weather: 68 percent say they now factor extreme weather risks into destination planning, with nearly half (47 percent) worried weather-related disruptions could impact their trips.

Americans reconsider destinations amid weather worries

The extreme weather brought about by the worsening effects of climate change is also steadily becoming an important factor in how Americans plan their summer vacations.

More than two-thirds of American travelers surveyed (68 percent) say they now take environmental risks and extreme weather, including hurricanes, wildfires, flooding, droughts, tornadoes, and heatwaves, into consideration when choosing where to travel.

With travelers continuing to witness severe weather events disrupt destinations across the U.S. and abroad, from record-breaking heat in Europe to hurricane threats along coastal regions and wildfire activity in popular vacation areas, nearly half of those surveyed (47 percent) say extreme weather conditions are among their top travel concerns this summer.

Younger travelers are leading the shift toward climate-conscious travel planning.Americans under 35 are significantly more likely (78 percent) than older generations to factor environmental risks into their vacation decisions, while Gen Z (55 percent) and millennials (54 percent) express heightened concern about the risk of extreme weather and the broader climate crisis on their summer travel plans.

The Global Travel Confidence Index results are based on a survey of about 2,000 Americans. The survey was conducted by national polling firm Ipsos Public Affairs on behalf of Allianz Partners.

– *Mia Taylor* / TravelPulse (TNS)